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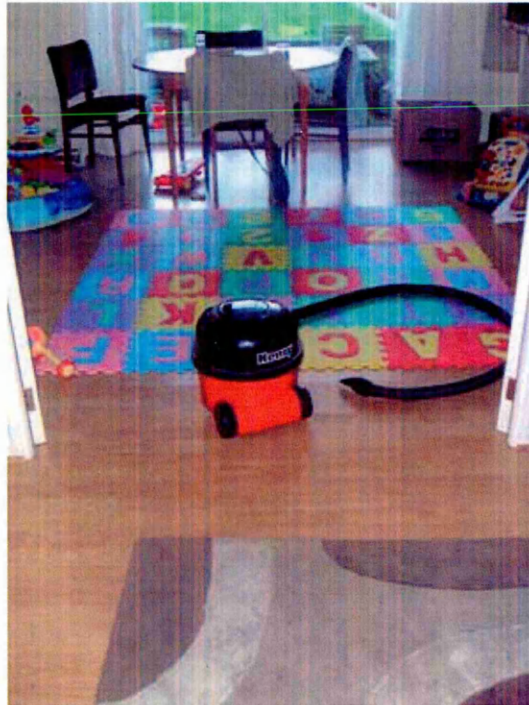
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The Everyday Activities of Motherhood



by

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Abstract

The focus of the research is a particular type of localised mothering, in the late 2000s, in the East Midlands of the UK, and the mundane practices that characterise motherhood for a group of women in this region. The thesis employs an ethnographic approach to explore the everyday activities of motherhood, through photographs taken by mothers of their activities, and their talk about them. The data presented is based on observations, with two mothers; and photographs taken by 18 mothers, and interviews. The data are offered as a pictorial and narrated description of their lives, and of their concerns at the time. This data is situated within a literature about the everyday, and how the self is theorised, considering maternal identities and associated subject positions.

The thesis begins with an introduction to the topic, before moving on to a review of different bodies of academic literature about the everyday, and how the self is theorised. The methodology chapter explores how I came to employ reflexive and auto/biographical methods and how visual methods emerged as a productive way of generating, and presenting data on maternal practices. The main body of the thesis takes the form of four chapters, revealing different aspects of the empirical data: food, material culture, space and time. The thesis continues with an analysis of themes that cut through these four chapters, and through which maternal identities and practices can be conceptualised: the creation of home and family through practices; and maternal feelings that gave meaning to these practices. I conclude by suggesting an integration of these practices and feelings to produce a sensual understanding of motherhood.

The first step in the process of developing a curriculum is to identify the needs of the students. This involves a thorough analysis of the current curriculum and the needs of the students. The next step is to set learning objectives for the course. These objectives should be specific, measurable, and achievable. The third step is to select the content for the course. This should be based on the learning objectives and the needs of the students. The fourth step is to develop the course materials. This includes creating lectures, assignments, and assessments. The fifth step is to deliver the course. This involves teaching the course and providing feedback to the students. The sixth step is to evaluate the course. This involves assessing the effectiveness of the course and making improvements as needed.

The process of developing a curriculum is a continuous one. It requires ongoing communication and collaboration between faculty members and administrators. It also requires a commitment to quality and a willingness to make changes as needed. By following these steps, faculty members can develop a curriculum that meets the needs of their students and provides a high-quality education.

Chapter 1: Introduction

My thesis is a presentation of a particular localised version of motherhood in the late 2000s, in the East Midlands of the UK. By addressing various aspects of motherhood that emerged from the women's photographs and their talk, I explore the everyday activities of motherhood, making use of knowledge through photographs taken by mothers of their everyday activities, and their talk about them. Through these, I also consider the identities of motherhood - the identities and the activities that they chose to show to me, and to talk about.

Currently, there is much anxiety about motherhood in the media – for example mothers are too old, or are too young, fertility rates are falling (eg Hadfield L, Rudoe N, and Sanderson-Mann J. 2007). Children are too obese, are spending too time on the computer, and are out of control. Motherhood has received much academic attention, and this interdisciplinarity is its strength. This body of work can largely be grouped into four areas. It has been studied from the perspective of social and structural contexts within which women mother, such as race and class (Byrne, 2006); inequalities between men's and women's lives (Gatrell, 2004); and a consideration of motherhood from a historical perspective (Carabine, 2001). It has been written about critically, such as in feminist accounts, and criticisms of normative discourses (Featherstone, 1997). Motherhood has also been studied from the perspective of the family in sociology, looking at kin and family as practices (Morgan, 1996). There are cultural accounts too – a looking at motherhood in popular culture, and mothers as consumers (Clarke, 2007). Finally, there are the more intimate and personal accounts, such as those from psychoanalytic traditions and auto/biographical writings (Baraitser, 2008).

This vast body of work on motherhood, which spans many decades, which uses different methodologies, and which is written about, and represented in many different ways, can suggest that yet more research on motherhood is not required.

However, it can be argued that new research on motherhood is required because it is dynamic and constantly changing. In fact, reviewing 10 years of scholarship on mothering, Arendell (2000) highlights some gaps in the literature and calls for:

“more attention to the lives of particular mothers – to mothers’ own voices – and to the lives and voices of diverse groups of mothers [...]. We need work that connects mothers’ personal beliefs and choices with their social situations”.

(Arendell 2000, p 1201).

This suggests that what is required is a focus on what mothers actually do – the practices surrounding mothering, including a way of researching that prioritises and listens to mothers themselves.

My interest in academic research on motherhood began with my degree in Psychology and my discovery of Social Constructionism, which helped me to come to terms with my feelings and experiences about bringing up children. For me, mothering is a charged issue. I began my research wanting to find out the secrets to being a ‘good mother’, believing that my own mothering of my two sons was not good enough. I was unsure about how to be a mother, I thought every mother was a better mother than me, and I compared myself to other mothers, who did things differently to me. Making decisions, I would wonder should I act like that mother, or another, or should I follow my own instincts, which seemed to be barely there.

A discovery of discourses, and Foucault, led me to research expert discourses in childcare literature, as part of an MSc dissertation. I was curious as to why and how expert advice, which changed over time, and sometimes contradicted itself, was adopted by mothers in their practices. This meant I began my doctoral research intending to explore how mothers engaged with expert discourses. Through my reading, and initial fieldwork, my focus broadened to consider women’s everyday activities as mothers, and to consider practices as an acting out of identity. In

addition, I experimented with various methods of data generation, before fixing firmly on the visual, and photo-interviewing. My issues with mothering had a final kick - I had just finished my revised research design, and I was beginning my fieldwork, when my own mother unexpectedly died.

My endeavours to understand and make sense of my own mothering, was paralleled in my doctoral studies as I searched for a theory that would help to explain my data. I did not begin my fieldwork with a theory, but instead looked for themes and theory to emerge from the data I generated. Thus my argument only began to take shape in the final months when I was writing my thesis. My hunt for a theoretical framework in which I could frame the stories of the women I researched, culminated in looking at motherhood from the perspective of two large bodies of theories: theories on the everyday, and theories on the self, both of which had relevance for understanding the everyday practices of motherhood, and maternal identity. These two bodies of theories represent to a large extent how I have theorised motherhood, and which I discuss in Chapter 8. In it, I show how motherhood largely consists of practices and feelings, which I argue need to be considered together to understand motherhood. I now move on to discuss the data I have drawn on in the development of my thesis.

The data I present centres on a series of observations with two mothers as well as photographs taken by 18 mothers, and their talk around them. I asked them to take 12 photographs that could tell me a story about their life as a mother, based on the everyday activities that they normally carried out, and which represented them as mothers, that told me who they were as mothers. I asked them to focus on the everyday activities, so I would talk to them about doing household chores, and other activities that have not necessarily been given much space in parenting texts about bringing up children, nor have they been given much attention in academic accounts, especially those that are concerned with theories of everyday life. I asked

them to focus on activities they enjoyed, and those they did not enjoy, things they did for themselves, things they felt they ought to do, but didn't, and things that they did, that other mothers did not.

The data produced by this method consists of the photographs taken by the mothers, an interview talking about these photographs, and my fieldnotes. From this data, I traced various emergent themes that were important to these women, and which became the focus of my data chapters. These were material culture, space, time and food. Together, these four separate strands illustrate the practices of motherhood in a particular region of the UK today. I situate these everyday lives within the literature about the everyday, and how the self is theorised, and within existing work about motherhood and the domestic space.

My first aim was to produce a description of their lives, pictorial and written, documenting the ordinary, which has sometimes been excluded from other accounts of mothering. This means that from the data, I tell their stories of motherhood, ones that they shared with me. These are written through the lens of my own experiences as a mother, which helped me to understand what they were saying. This auto/biographical stance has meant that rather than presenting a neat account of my data, and the research I carried out, this thesis also includes a discussion of how I arrived at my chosen methodology, and how it evolved over the first year or so of my doctoral studies – that it was a messy and involved process.

I now continue by presenting the structure of my thesis, and a very brief description of each chapter.

In my thesis in chapter 2, I begin by discussing contemporary debates about motherhood and domestic space, and how these have been theorised with regard to everyday life, and identity. I interrogate notions of the everyday, and discursive

and narrative concepts of identity, and consider how these provide the tools for understanding the gendered practices of mothering. I conclude by exploring the relationship between identity and the everyday, and I consider the usefulness of these theoretical tools in helping me to interpret and understand my data.

In chapter 3, I discuss my methodology – its design and rationale, and methods of analysis. I outline the processes through which I determined upon my final research design, discussing the challenges associated with researching the everyday lives of mothers from an auto/biographical perspective. In this chapter I also consider the problems of representing data, and describe some of the solutions I have used in my thesis.

I then move on to the main part of my thesis, four data chapters which explore the women's everyday practices as mothers, using the topics of food, material culture, space and time to convey their everyday experiences in what is largely domestic space. In these chapters, I use diverse theories to interpret my data, for example I use an ethnographic understanding in these chapters, including the use of photographs. I define motherhood as practice (drawing on Morgan's (1996) understanding of family as practices), that through the practices carried out by the women in their role as mother, a maternal identity is constituted. Through these practices they enact different subject positions in relation to the maternal.

In Chapter 4 I discuss the items of consumption that were important to the women in their lives as mothers, and the place of these objects in their daily practices. In Chapter 5 I consider the meanings of space for these women, and how these meanings of space constituted their experience. In Chapter 6 I present the women's experiences and understandings of time, and consider how their everyday lives are constituted through time, including the immediate, the present, past and future. Whilst time and space have been considered together, especially in the

discipline of geography (Elias 1987/1992, Davies 1990; May and Thrift, 2001; Davies, 1990), I have found it more helpful to consider them separately. In Chapter 7, I present the various activities associated with food and feeding the family, which helped to structure the women's everyday lives, and through which relationships were sustained.

The maternal practices that I identify relating to material culture, space, time and food are productive in helping me to convey a flavour of the everyday lives of this particular group of women. These four areas of motherhood centred around food, material culture, space and time also prefigure two clusters of theoretical themes which create a narrative strand throughout this thesis and to which I constantly return. In Chapter 8 I bring these practices together and look at their underlying commonalities to define various emerging themes.

One cluster of themes to emerge from my data centres around the practices carried out by the women in the home, for the purpose of the maintenance of the home, and of the family. I focus on the boundary-making practices of the women in the home, and how this is related to a reworked definition of public and private. This boundary making extends to issues of social class and 'othering', which is in turn related to practices which emphasise similarities and differences – altogether producing an account of localised mothering. I also focus on those practices whose purpose is to maintain and preserve the home, as a symbol of the family, and which are related to the aesthetics of motherhood and of childhood.

The second cluster of themes centres around the feelings of the women about their role as mother, feelings which emerged from their talk and photographs. These include emotions; pleasure, desires and the imaginary; and memories, change and continuity. I then discuss how the theories that I introduced in Chapter 2 helped me to reach my conclusions, helping me to interpret my data, as well as formulating

my thesis on practices of motherhood, and the everyday. I conclude by proposing an integrated view of motherhood, that connects these two areas of practices and feelings, to produce a sensual understanding of motherhood.

In Chapter 9 I consider methodology. I assess the rigour of my research, and situate my research within existing literature on motherhood. I ask whether my study contributes something new, and consider its usefulness too, in how my research findings could have practice implications for public health policies and healthcare professionals.

Chapter 2: The everyday, the self, motherhood and domestic space

Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the everyday activities of motherhood, and I focus on the practices of mothering which I consider to be related to maternal identities and different subject positions. To contextualise the thesis, in this chapter I begin by exploring the relationship between motherhood and theories of everyday life, and I consider the extent to which this work provides the tools for understanding the gendered practices of mothering. The chapter concludes by an exploration of how the 'self' can be situated in relation to the everyday, pointing towards the empirical strategies that will be outlined in the following chapter.

Motherhood and theories of everyday life

"Everyday life is synonymous with the habitual, the ordinary, the mundane, yet it is also strangely elusive, that which resists our understanding and escapes our grasp." (Felski, 1999-2000 p 15)

The problematic of everyday life, that is, how it is theorised, researched and represented, has been a concern of many theorists, and there are competing claims as to what everyday life is, how it should be theorised, and represented. It is suggested that it is difficult to study the everyday. In the quote above, Felski (1999-2000) considers that whilst the everyday consists of things that are ordinary, at the same time understanding the everyday is hard to pin down.

Smith (1987) contended that understanding the everyday should start with the individual. She argued that women were excluded from the themes and topics within the sociological discourse, and that the remedy was to start from the experience and actualities of women's situations. Early social theories of culture tended to focus on the masculine world of the public sphere – the street and the

workplace, and it is these theories that Smith was arguing against. The emergence of feminist cultural studies from the 1980's brought with it a valorisation of the everyday life of women, and their domestic activities. Indeed, Felski (1999-2000) considers that feminism has conceived of itself as a politics of everyday life, and that in feminist standpoint theory, women's connection to daily life is celebrated.

Everyday life could be considered to be the unfolding of a culture, as the term culture refers to the symbolic and learned aspects of human society and encompasses all that is socially transmitted. Williams, for example (1958) famously wrote that culture is the "whole way of life" p 16, and studied its lived dimension. Representing a shift away from the European philosophers, he contended that everyday life was ordinary, and argued for a culture of the everyday that recognised the working classes. Cultural theorists consider that culture is found in the specific practices of everyday life; and popular culture has come to mean the everyday lives of ordinary people (Fiske, 1992). One way that the 'everyday' has been conceptualised is in terms of the ways that individuals and groups resist and appropriate social processes. However, culturalist readings have tended to emphasise the structures of culture, embodied in cultural languages and codes, rather than its lived forms. These include concerns with ideology and class formations; power, ethnicity, race and psychoanalysis (Hall, 1997). Thus whilst a study of culture appears to be concerned with the everyday lives of individuals, the way that it is theorised, may draw attention away from the everyday experience of individuals towards a focus on social structures and processes.

In this section, I consider two strands of writing: research on motherhood, and theories of the everyday, and I formulate connections between the two, showing how both strands can enrich an understanding of the other.

Resistance and mothering

Early feminists such as de Beauvoir (1953/1988), Friedan (1963) and Oakley (1974/1985) were the first to write about, and in Oakley's case, research motherhood. They were concerned with the structures of society, that they considered constraining to women, as at the time of their writing, women were expected to stay at home and to look after their children, and perform domestic chores. This approach to motherhood and the domestic chores continues today, as authors such as Gatrell (2004) and Hochschild (1989/2003) examine the allocation of domestic tasks between women and their partners, and how women manage their employment and domestic duties. When feminists focus on the everyday they identify a profound difference between the public and the private, and in this way, they consider that the everyday opposes power (Rose, 1993). The idea that society contains structures, in this case gender, contested by individuals, suggests that certain theories of the everyday might be useful to understand these processes.

Theorists writing about the everyday, such as David Chaney (2002) point out how cultural theory has tended to focus on how people resist the power of the dominant structures of society through their practices. For nineteenth century European philosophers such as Simmel, Heidegger and Lefebvre, for example, the everyday was considered a site of resistance, revolution and transformation. In particular, those associated with a Marxist point of view argued that the everyday could be considered a synonym for the alienation and oppression of the working classes. Chaney suggests that in theoretical terms, the location of alienation is no longer seen to reside in labour relations, but has shifted to relations of consumption. Such an approach can be seen in the work of de Certeau's suggestion that it is in the practices of everyday life that power is routinely resisted and contested. Within this framework, resistance is carried out by subverting, for example using city space for other uses than those for which they were intended, or reading a novel against the grain. In this vein Fiske (1992) emphasises the creativity of everyday life, and how

people engage in creative practices to overcome their social positioning. He considers that the social order constrains and oppresses people, but at the same time offers them resources to fight against those constraints.

This suggests a reading of work on mothering as a practice of everyday life in which power is resisted and contested. This was certainly the argument put forward by early feminists in their work, who argued against the conditions of women. De Beauvoir (1949) contended that the repetitive practices of housework meant that women were not able to establish their existence, nor have their individuality recognised. Their housework duties were seen as one of a number of obstacles standing in the way of the woman operating as a creative and intellectual force in society. Similarly, in the USA, Friedan (1963) criticised the idea that women could only find fulfilment through childrearing and homemaking, and like de Beauvoir, felt that being a housewife obstructed the process of self-realisation. Although criticised for speaking for the middle classes, she nevertheless showed that affluent middle class women had restricted lives. A little later in the UK, Oakley (1974) argued against the dominant economic structures of society. She analysed housework in economic terms, alongside other paid employment. She argued that the housewife role was exploitative, alienating, and no better than the lowest of menial tasks. Contemporary research on motherhood could consider that dominant and normative discourses and narratives of 'good mothering' for example (eg Sanderson-Mann, 2005; Andrews, 2002) are constitutive of the structures of society that are to be resisted as well as negotiated by individuals, in their everyday practices.

Whilst feminist research continues on the division of labour in the home, and how domestic and parenting labour interacts with work outside the home (Hochschild, 1989/2003; Gatrell, 2004), recent work has been carried out which suggests that women's activities are indicative of their agency. These writers explore the home as

a site of creativity as well as a site of oppression for women. For example Sarah Pink suggests that housework might be seen as instances of women's and men's agency; and that whilst cleaning and housework is repetitive of processes and actions, they can be performed in a way that is "expressive and constitutive" of self-identity and feelings (2004, p 50). Iris Marion Young specifically challenges the way that second wave feminism has denigrated ideas of the home-making. For Young, homemaking is "meaning-making": "endowing things with living meaning, arranging them in space in order to facilitate the life activities of those to whom they belong, and preserving them, along with their meaning" (2006, p 132).

Doucet (1995) scrutinises the fair allocation of domestic tasks, arguing that consideration of domestic chores needs to go beyond the routine work mainly carried out by women, to include the less routine household work of men, such as changing the oil in the car. Doucet contends that household tasks need not always be defined as chores, as some are pleasurable. This was also found by Gabb (2008), who in her research found that many mothers framed their role as primary carer in a positive light, relishing the more intimate mother-child relationships. For many women the mother-child relationship was fulfilling and emotionally rewarding, and provides sufficient recompense for their maternal labour. Gabb suggests this can explain why the gendered patterning of family relationships remains.

Change and mothering

Other academic accounts on the work of motherhood has addressed change, such as the changing relationships between men and women, and the world of work. The everyday has been conceptualised as something in opposition to change. This means that if society is conceptualised as constantly changing, then the everyday represents the banal, repetitive and dull dimensions of culture. Chaney suggests that the European philosophers, for example, were concerned with transcendence, hoping that the mundane cycle of everyday life might one day be escaped. The

notion of transcending the everyday suggests that routine is oppressive, and within this perspective everyday life becomes a devalued term in opposition to a superior and more authentic form of existence.

Recently, this notion of the everyday as banal, has been reconsidered. Felski (1999-2000) writes that repetition is one of the ways in which we organise the world, make sense of our environment and stave off the threat of chaos. The regularity of routine is soothing and provides comfort. Routine is what makes the everyday. The significance of routines and habits in the making of social structures is also noted by late modern commentators who are interested in how people experience insecurity in their lives, because of societal changes. So for example, Giddens (1991) defines 'ontological security' as the trust people have in social structure; everyday actions have some degree of predictability, thus ensuring social stability. Routines may strengthen, comfort and provide meaning. We can never transcend habit, it is an essential part of our embeddedness in everyday life, and our existence as social beings.

Others have written about the impact of social change on the lives of women, and mothers. Anderson and Ettorre (2006) point to the uncertainties and anxieties pervading contemporary family life, as documented by the concept of the risk society. They suggest that this body of work highlights the emotional and physical tensions and struggles involved for women in trying to successfully juggle a family and a career; the increase in partnership failure; domestic violence; the social impact of increases in life expectancy and the rise in single-person households (especially among women).

Various writers have identified changes in the organisation of the family. Silva (1999) claims that her research suggests a trend towards the

"breaking down of traditional gender roles [which] involves, for instance, neutralising the gender connotation of certain household appliances or challenging some of the negative connotations of 'heterosexual housework'" (Silva 2002, p 336).

She notes an overall reduction in time spent on housework owing to the increase in female participation in workforce. The normalisation of female employment is echoed by Hughes (2002) who writes that it is said that it is no longer permissible to just be a mother. She writes that the full time model of motherhood has been rejected,

"the values of independence and individualism have also become the normative standards through which women's lives are judged" (p 63).

The research on motherhood that I outline above suggests that the mundane lives of women do indeed undergo change. This suggests a view of the everyday that is not in opposition to change, but incorporates change, that as society changes, so do individual practices, and vice-versa in a continual circle of mutual influence.

In this section I have briefly explored how the everyday has been theorised, relating this to literature on motherhood, and I have shown how some of these theories can be useful in understanding motherhood. In the next section I consider another body of work which I contend can be used to examine the everyday, by looking at the practices of individuals.

Family as practices

In this section I outline other ways of considering the everyday. I consider how the everyday has been theorised as practices, and how ethnography and phenomenology can be different ways of approaching these practices.

There has been a recent focus on practices in theories of everyday life and the family. A key influence is Bourdieu's work on the practices of consumption in the organisation of everyday life (1984/1979). Practices include things like taste in food, culture and presentation, bodily comportment, such as ways of talking and walking. Practices lie at the heart of the habitus, which is a system of dispositions, which are lasting, acquired schemes of perception, thought and action. Writing specifically on the family in 1996, he considered that practices made up the lived-in and taken-for-granted world

"this world, in families as in anything else, is constantly being created and reproduced through the day-to-day activities of the members" (p 21).

The work of David Morgan has also been influential in encouraging a focus on practices. In 1996 he made an important intervention into the sociology of the family, arguing for a shift in attention away from structures and ideologies, towards understanding the family as a set of activities, or practices. These practices are routines, located in culture, history and personal biography and they change according to circumstances. This means considering what families 'are' rather than what families 'do' (Silva and Smart, 1999), rather than relying on an institutional definition of the family. This understanding of the family involves a focus on the regularities, and the everyday:

"it is often in the routine or the trivial that some of the wider concerns are understood or constructed" (Morgan, 1996 p 17).

He suggests that family practices do not only exist in pieces of activity, but also in the routine talk about family.

Morgan (2004) suggests three overlapping meanings of the everyday. First, he includes events or experiences that tend to happen to people during their lives, life events, such as birth or marriage – which are seen to be something special.

Second, he suggests that the everyday means the regular, repeated, routine,

familiar and banal. Third, he considers that the everyday covers the normative idea of the normal, frequency linked to local, class or national identities. Considering the second meaning – that of routine, and the familiar, he suggests that it is not just the home that provides a sense of regularity and repeatedness, but also education and employment. He suggests that this sense of everyday is closely linked to the material conditions of life, these are the “regularities brought about by the business of earning a living, feeding, clothing and sheltering and the continuation of human life” (p 41). Like Giddens, he considers that such regularities bring a sense of ontological security.

A focus on practices is consistent with a focus on performance, which Butler (2000) considers to be the product of various discursive conventions, norms and practices that are cited and reiterated across a range of social settings and in a range of interactions. Her use of performativity draws on, and develops Foucault’s notion of disciplinary practices and technologies through which the subject is brought into being – the subject appears through the performative enactment of norms and practices. There are bodies of work that have been used to research everyday practices: ethnography and phenomenology, and it is to these that I now turn.

Ethnography is generally seen as a method, rather than as a theory of everyday life. However, like all methodologies it is underpinned by theory, and has its own ideas about the nature of phenomena – for example, that it is observable through practices. Ethnographers aim to understand from the participants’ point of view, and consider that as they go about their lives, people are trying to make sense of their lives. This means that the everyday is not a set of activities or a structure of routines, but a way of investing those things with personal meaning (Chaney, 2002).

Phenomenology is another approach to researching and theorising the everyday. It is concerned with the way things appear to individuals through experience or consciousness, gaining knowledge from the senses, the imagination, and words. Like ethnography, phenomenology concentrates on the meaning of individuals, the actor's point of view (Yardley, 1997; Benton and Craib, 2001), and it is concerned with the way in which we impose meaning on the world. Phenomenology has relevance for studying everyday life, van Manen (1990) considering that lived experience is the starting and end point of phenomenological research. He outlines four existentials that are helpful as guides for reflection in the research process: lived space, lived body, lived time, and lived human relations. In phenomenology, these are considered as belonging to the fundamental structure of the lifeworld. I consider that they can also be considered as the fundamental aspects to everyday life.

Phenomenology has been criticised for being more concerned with description than explanation (eg Felski, 1999-2000). However, drawing on Merleau-Ponty's idea where the individual cannot be separated from her or his world context, Dahlberg (2006) argues that the world is in the individual as much as the individual is in the world. By studying individuals, it is possible to gain an understanding of society. Nevertheless, there are problems associated with studying the everyday from a phenomenological perspective. If, as Felski (1999-2000) suggests, that for phenomenologists, everyday life is the routine of conducting one's day to day experience without making it an object of conscious attention, then this can make it hard to research, if it is something that individuals do not normally pay attention to. In addition, lived experience can be hard to represent – how can a flow of consciousness be represented by written words on a page, or by visual means, such as photographs?

Examining the different ways in which the everyday has been theorised reveals a tension between the aims of different bodies of work, such as ethnographic work and the writings of cultural theorists. This can be reconceptualised as tension between top down theories and empirically based bottom up theories. This debate has most recently been expounded by Smart (2007) who argued that everyday lives need to be looked at with a focus on personal meanings, and how they resonate with social and cultural meanings. However, she, and others contend that personal and local meaning does not mean disregarding wider social structures. Studying everyday life in its minutiae can reveal understandings of larger social structures and forms (Crow and Pope, 2008).

This issue was earlier addressed by Giddens' theory of structuration (1984), which argued that through their actions, people make society, but are at the same time constrained by it. From this perspective social structures are reproduced in the everyday practices of social actors who are in turn knowledgeable about the practices in which they are engaged. For those such as Giddens, action and structure cannot be analysed separately, as structures are created, maintained and changed through actions.

Implications for research

I have shown how cultural theorists have tried to answer the question 'what is the everyday', their theories attempting to locate the nature of the everyday, and I have shown that a focus on practices, and bottom up epistemological approaches, such as ethnography and phenomenology, offer ways of making sense of the everyday. I began this chapter by suggesting that because it is everywhere, the everyday is hard to research, and it is this unboundedness that I now address, using the example of research on mothering and domestic chores.

The boundaries between household chores and mothering can be difficult to draw, and this has been reflected in the focus of older research on motherhood. In a study of women with pre-school children, Boulton (1983) found that the two duties of women in the home: childcare and housework, created stress when one role conflicted with the other. Exploring motherhood through the lens of class, Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) also found connections with domestic labour. In their analysis, they suggested that it was not possible to separate housework and mothering, noting for example that housework such as eating lunch, was where the work of mothering took place. They were critical of notions of the sensitive mother, which assumed that "domestic life [was] centred around her children and not around her housework" (p 20). They found that middle class mothers were expected to hide their labour, instead incorporating housework into play. Although these studies point to a tangled relationship between mothering and housework, they also suggest that meanings associated with the private work of the domestic are increasingly implicated in the public and paid work of both women and men.

The dual roles of mother and housewife have long been synonymous with each other, something that the earlier feminists argued against, and my research could be criticised for perpetuating this relationship between the two. Is it still relevant to link housework and motherhood, as I am doing in my research? Most writers on motherhood suggest that this is still the case, that women spend more time on housework than men, especially those who do not work outside the home full time. The UK 2000 Time Use Survey established that women spent nearly three hours a day on average on housework (excluding shopping and childcare), whereas men spent one hour 40 minutes. However, the survey found that as the age of the children in the household increased the amount of time spent on childcare by both females and males decreased.

Representing the everyday

In this chapter I have explored some of the difficulties involved in defining and understanding the everyday. I have suggested that the everyday is unbounded and experienced as a flow, meaning that any attempt to capture it will be problematic. Extracting, in order to understand, and represent, takes away its ceaselessness. Felski (1999-2000) goes so far as arguing that the everyday ceases to be everyday when subject to critical scrutiny – that studying the everyday somehow changes it. One tradition for the representation of mothering, family and the domestic has been photography and here I explore some of the ways that visual representations of mothering and the domestic can help to frame the kind of work that I present in this thesis.

In the past, images of mothers, such as paintings, were iconic, and consisted of subject matter such as the Virgin Mary. Photographs of mothers have sometimes become icons, such as Dorothea Lange's (1936) *Migrant Mother*, which became a symbol of the suffering of others. The photograph achieved the status of myth and the fact that she is a mother has something to say about the 'myth' of motherhood. Jo Spence has produced a large body of work, some of which concerned the family. One project her workshop was involved in was called 'Who's holding the baby?', an attempt to expose the ideology of motherhood, a montage of pictures and words, and adverts. She used photography to explore motherhood, for example taking photographs of herself dressed as her mother in various poses in order to work through her emotions, concerning her relationship with her mother (Spence, 1988). In addition, as well as exploring motherhood through photographs, the domestic has also been explored photographically, (Holland, 2004; Rose 2003, 2004, 2005). However, within the visual realm, motherhood does not seem to have been given so much attention as childhood, where there is a large body of work (Higonnet, 1998, Holland, 2004, Fehily 2000).

Family photography, that is, photographs taken by families, of their own family, often reveals something of the underside of the myth of family - mess, unruliness, mundanity, clutter, paraphernalia of everyday life, and as such have something to say about motherhood and maternal practices. However, family photographs are selective, and are symbolic representations of family life. There are whole areas of life that do not get recorded, eg workplace, shopping trips, going to the doctors. They are also selective in that family photos tend to be celebrations. Spence and Holland (2000) note that photographs of disgruntled teenagers, rowing parents, sickness, sibling rivalry, which are all part of family life, do not get taken, or they get thrown away. Quite often these problems associated with family relationships are dealt with in texts, but are not transferred to the visual medium.

Professional photographers and artists on the other hand, have used the visual to document everyday life, and show a different perspective. For example Nick Waplington (1991) took photographs of two working-class families in Nottingham. The photographs are of everyday family life, including the rough and tumble of family life, people (fathers) picking babies up in the air, children snacking, a man pinching a woman's bottom, women lying on the sofa, a baby being sick, a girl dancing in kitchen, her dress swirling out, children playing. Another modern artist, Kathy Wilkes, uses her own everyday domestic objects in her work. She produces sculpture-like installations, using items such as old plates, and used food jars. Whilst she does not like to discuss her work, the Milton Keynes gallery guide for an exhibition in 2008 considered that this installation concerned the notion of invisible labour within the feminine sphere, which was "present in all aspects of everyday life, yet kept outside of the systems of material and symbolic gratification."

Considering photographic practices I have shown that compared to childhood, motherhood has not been the subject of such close attention, and I contend that research that uses photographs to represent mothering can help to remedy this

imbalance, as representing can be a vehicle for exploring. Considering family photography, I argued that it is usually the pleasing aspects of family life that are represented, and I suggest that photography that represents mothering should encompass all facets of everyday life: good and bad. Finally, through considering how professional photographers have documented family life, I show that the visual is an ideal medium for the documentation of practices and material culture, that perhaps written accounts cannot completely capture.

In my discussion of previous research on mothering, I have drawn on theories of the everyday that have emerged from a range of disciplines and traditions, including the cultural studies tradition which is also linked to the study of popular culture; and ethnographic and phenomenological work that focus on practices. I have argued that the everyday is hard to research and discussed how it can be difficult to represent. In some of these theories the everyday has been likened to an entity that is in opposition to social structures, and in opposition to change. A focus on practices, and a grounded epistemology suggests beginning research on the everyday and motherhood, with the individual, and it is to this body of theories that I now turn.

Motherhood, identity and the self

My study is both an exploration of everyday practices, but also a study of how individual subjects are constituted through the mundane activities they carry out in the course of their mothering. Dorothy Smith argues that the everyday world *is* part of society, and argues that the individual and society need to be studied together (1999), and for an intermingling of theory and people's experiences (1987). This means that in this section I outline some of the ways that the self has been theorised, and identify and explain some of the key concepts that I draw on in the thesis, including discourse, narrative, as well as the role of memory, emotions and the imaginary in the constitution of identity and a maternal self.

The Maternal self

There has been much research carried out on maternal identity, and writers may draw more or less on the narrative and discursive self, that I discuss below. It is considered that maternal identity is an important topic for research, and theory, as becoming a mother is often seen as an event causing significant change in a woman's identity, (Smith 1999). It is generally thought that when a woman becomes a mother, that an

"earlier independent, solitary unitary self [...] must yield to a more fluid self"

(Baraitser, 2006, p 218).

The maintaining of a sense of self by new mothers is sometimes conceived of as a struggle (Miller, 2005). Miller saw the mothers gradually develop social selves as mothers, this emerged through practice and a making sense of perplexing and confusing experiences.

However, other writers suggest that the identity of mother includes a sense of continuity. Arguing against Giddens' and Beck's ideas on identity, Bailey (1999) found that the mothers she researched had a sense of a continued self, rather than encountering disjuncture, however their experience of self altered along a number of different dimensions. She suggests a refracted self. She found that becoming a mother could reveal concealed and compounded elements of a woman's personality, and that whilst motherhood meant that there could be tension between different parts of their lives, the transition to motherhood offered women a new sense of cohesion and direction. Hollway (2001) writes that poststructuralism suggests that mothers deal with being a mother, and all the other parts of themselves, as multiple fragmented selves, possibly existing in tension. She also urges us to remember that mothers are not only mothers but are women too. She believes that psychoanalysis and psychology, by looking at mothers through the prism of child's needs,

"have been compromised by representing women who are mothers as being entirely the objects of their children's development" (p 18).

Notions of the self: poststructural, narrative and discursive and reflexive

I have suggested that the individual and society are intertwined, and that by studying the individual, it is possible to understand society, and vice versa. In the postmodern world the self and society are considered as two sides of the same coin. Individuals, or subjects are considered dynamic and multiple, positioned and produced by discourses (Henriques et al, 1984). This conceptualisation of the self is linked to poststructuralism, which:

"proposes a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory, and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak" (Weedon, 1994 p 175).

In fact, at times identities are considered to be necessary constructions, or fictions (Nixon, 1997). Nixon considers that we need identities in order to locate ourselves to others, and to organise a sense of who we are. In addition, he considers that there is cultural or symbolic work involved in the process of creating identities, an idea which can be related to cultural theories of the everyday. In the following sections I discuss approaches to this fluid self, notably discursive and narrative approaches, and the reflexive self.

- *The discursive self*

Discourses are considered to construct entire institutions, such as medicine, the judiciary, science or motherhood. A study about discourses of motherhood, for example, would consider statements about motherhood which provided a certain kind of knowledge about motherhood. It would also identify rules which prescribe certain ways of talking about motherhood and exclude other ways. It would consist of identifying subjects who in some ways personified a particular discourse.

Discourses can also be practices, this idea drawing on Foucault's conception of discourse as a repertoire of activities, which establish a particular identity. He argues not

"treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak (Foucault, 1972, p 48-9).

Thus mothers, for example, create a subject position for themselves in relation to the discourses about motherhood, positioning themselves as the subject of particular discourses, and acting them out in particular ways. Maternal identity is therefore constituted by the activities mothers do – those they choose to do, those they choose not to do, and the meanings they give those activities. Motherhood is therefore a consequence, rather than as a cause of the activities that are carried out, and motherhood is done or accomplished in the course of social interaction.

Individuals are produced through discursive practices, and are perhaps better described as subject positions, rather than individuals. This is related to identity, because how people negotiate discourses, and how they engage with discourses, is part of how they perceive their identity. An individual's understanding and experience of their social identity is discursively constructed, and that people understand themselves through the categories available to them in discourse (Davies and Harré, 1990). Whilst a discourse has a constitutive force, people are also capable of exercising choice in relation to those practices. Taylor suggests that

"a subject position can be understood as a temporary identity which is conferred on or taken up by a speaker, and which becomes both who she or he is seen to be, by others, and the perspective from which she or he sees the world" (2006, p 96).

This means that a subject position is a possibility in talk, and that the position is created through talk. This can explain the discontinuities in the production of self with multiple and contradictory discursive practices. Thus positioning is a discursive

process where selves are located in conversations and as participants in jointly produced story lines. We locate

“ourselves in conversations according to those narrative forms with which we are familiar and bringing to those narratives our own subjective lived histories through which we have learnt metaphors, characters and plot” (Davies and Harré, 1990 p 52).

Once an individual takes up a particular subject position, an individual sees the world from that position, and in terms of the story lines relevant to that discourse (Davies and Harré, 1990), although it is important to remember that a subject will be crossed by a number of discourses – an individual can be a mother, woman, wife, employee, or friend.

Discussions of discourses also include considerations of power within a society, and how knowledge about the topic acquires authority. Those wishing to place more emphasis upon human agency within the flexible deployment of language tend to discuss interpretive repertoires, rather than discourses. Compared to discourses, interpretive repertoires are

“smaller and more fragmented, offering speakers a whole range of different rhetorical opportunities” (Edley, 2001 p 202).

The notions of subject positions, discourses and interpretive repertoires all have implications for the interactions between individuals and society – those structures of society that I referred to when discussing the everyday. In my earlier, pre-doctoral research I was concerned to identify some of the societal structures of power relating to motherhood, in the form of discourses. Drawing on approaches to discourse analysis that were in turn influenced by Foucault (Carabine, 2001), I identified one, over-arching discourse, the normalising discourse of ‘good mother’ (Sanderson-Mann, 2005). I argued that because this discourse was presented

within childcare texts, it was an authoritative version which was more likely to be accepted, and that mothers were powerless to resist this common-sense discourse.

Sometimes there is a tendency to assume that the structures, institutions and practices of mothering have clear-cut and uniform effects (Featherstone, 1997), and this is the assumption I had made in my earlier research, in fact what was missing was the individual - I had not considered how mothers negotiated and appropriated this advice. Work by theorists in the discipline of audience research suggests an agentic subject, someone who was free to make whatever interpretations they wanted from the texts they read (Barker, 1989; Morley, 1992). Later, this notion was reformulated, suggesting that text or audience are unified or bounded, but that they are experienced in relation to each other (Wood, 2005). What has been missing, then, from earlier research on discursive approaches to motherhood, and identity, is a fuller account of maternal subjectivity, including fantasy, meaning, biography and relational dynamics, which

“inform individual women’s positions in relation to a variety of discourses concerning motherhood” (Featherstone, 1997, p 7).

Having considered discursive approaches to identity, I now address the idea of a narrative self.

- *Narrative, identity and memory*

“What we call our life is essentially a set of stories we tell ourselves about our past, present and future” Kenyon and Randall (1997, p 2).

The late modern concept of the self includes the notion of a narrative, or biography of the self – a way of sustaining a coherent sense of the self, which can be seen as one way of coping with a rapidly changing world. Giddens considers that a person’s identity is to be found “in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going” (1991, p 54). A biography is a mechanism for producing the experience of self as unity.

It is considered that individuals make sense of experience, and who they are, by casting it in narrative form. Thus the narrated subject produces what appears to be a coherent identity. The concept of narrative identity means that individuals understand their life and identity as characters in a story. Such understanding involves being reflexive, drawing on memory, and imagination. However, Riessman (1993) points out that some events are impossible to narrate, such as torture. It could be that everyday life is also not always possible to narrate, perhaps through a lack of vocabulary, especially if, as Gardiner (2000) states, that some aspects of everyday life are hidden.

Narrators do not tell their story in a cultural vacuum, individuals are considered to be social and cultural products, and the situated individual draws on cultural, universal stories, to make sense of their life. Our own stories reflect cultural ideas, and ideas in society - 'social facts'. One of the most common prevailing narratives, according to Andrews (2002) is that of the myth of family, and of motherhood in particular. The influence of this narratives of mothering means that women can struggle to manage the expectations of these dominant narratives and their own experiences (Miller, 1998).

Because the self is narrated, and uses past experience to make sense of identity, memory is important to narrative. The past is reconstructed through memory, and we order and revise our memories, and memory shapes the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves (Kuhn, 1995/2002). In addition, memories can change to suit an audience or to fit a newly crafted identity (Smart, 2007). An individual's memory is not merely personal, but is also intertwined with social and collective memory (Kuhn, 2002) – a societal level. Families occupy a special place in the laying down of shared memories, as they provide the context in which we learn what to remember and what to forget (Smart, 2007). Some writers have drawn attention to the role of photographs in memory, and in narrating the self (Harrison,

2002; Kuhn, 1995/2002). Harrison considers that photographs are "an important site for the embodiment of memory" (p 109), and that within them they enable a process of working out the self in the past and present.

Stephanie Taylor has argued for considering together these two notions of the self: discursive and narrative. She considers that narratives are discursive resources, and that narrative is part of the identity work of positioning:

"our understandings of who we are, our identities, are derived from the accumulated ideas, images, associations and so on which make up the wider social and cultural contexts of our lives. In analytic terms, these are the discursive resources available to speakers. ... Talk is the site and the range of practices in which our identities are constituted, out of the resources made available by those larger contexts" (2006, p 94).

She contends that discursive approaches fail to account for continuity in identity, whereas in narrative approaches, coherence and continuity are constructed. In addition, she argues that narrative can explain investment in subject positions, which discursive approaches can not.

- *The reflexive self*

Associated with the narrative approach, is the notion that individuals are being reflexive, reflecting on their past, and their futures, to make sense of who they are today. As reflection takes place all the time, this means that the self constantly evolves, as new perspectives on the self are emerge through relationships with others. Reflexivity involves both reflecting on the self and others, suggesting that identity is relational. Burr (2009) considers George Mead's idea of the 'generalized other', considering it to be part of reflective practice, and part of an internal conversation with oneself. The 'generalised other' is used to compare with individuals' own experiences, as well as involving a more complex process of internal negotiation within the individual. The reflection is like an inner

conversation, a process through which we play out the roles of various members of our group. According to Mead, when a moral problem appears, different actions are presented as different voices. To me, this has similarities with how individuals negotiate discourses.

I have presented a self that is distributed, enmeshed with society, and relationships. It is a reflexive self produced through discourses and narrative. Yet these accounts of the individual are at odds with how research participants think of themselves. Whilst the notion of a discursive and narrative self accounts for change and for the interplay of the individual and society, it nevertheless does not pay much attention to the embodied self. In the next section I present a more personal view of identity, and a final set of theories which I will draw on to help me interpret my data and which will enrich my interpretations.

A personal approach

Smart (2007), in discussing personal lives, has introduced new ways of thinking about individuals, and relationships, including a consideration of emotions; relatedness and embeddedness; and the imaginary. In this section I look at the self with regard to relationships; emotions which refers to an embodied aspect of the self, and the imaginary, which is the mental aspect of the self. These aspects of the self are lacking in narrative and discursive approaches. These subjects: relationships, emotions and the imaginary are also much closer to the conception of the everyday as practices, as I outlined in the previous section.

- *The self and relationships*

Individuals exist because of, and through their relationships with others, and thus cannot be regarded as separate, individualised subjects (Gillies, 2003). Rather than the self governing individual, this is a focus on selves as embedded in a network of care and responsibility. This concept of the self, produced and sustained by

relationships with others can complement the idea of the self as discursively and narratively produced. Emotions, which are experienced by all individuals, as something internal, to them, can also enrich the concept of the self.

In the previous section I concluded that human beings were reflexive, and that as well as reflecting on themselves, we reflect on other people. Cooley's concept of the 'looking-glass self' suggests that a person's understanding of their identity is a reflection of how he or she is regarded by others; that we see ourselves through the eyes of other people, incorporating their views of us into our self-concept. We do this by considering similarities and differences (Jenkins, 2004). Thus the self constantly evolves, as new perspectives on the self emerge through relationships with others.

The linking of individual lives with other's lives, means that individuals are embedded in a web of relationships including people who have gone before. Smart (2007) describes this as embeddedness, and suggests it is a useful counterweight to concepts of individualism. She contends that these relationships will also be important away from the presence of others, as individuals engage in imaginary conversations with people we have ruptures with. Like the reflexive self, Smart argues that identity is partly constituted through embeddedness, 'who I am like', or 'who I am not like'. She argues that the two versions of the self are compatible – the self according to the individualisation thesis which considers that we make our own selves, and that we are the authors of our own lives; and also that familial roots which can "locate a person emotionally, genetically and culturally are essential for ontological security and a sense of self" (2007, p 81).

Relationships are forged through everyday practices and families are made and remade through everyday family practices and intimate relations (Gabb, 2008), a similar notion to Morgan's idea of family practices in the previous section. Whilst

relatedness can refer to individuals who are constituted through their own close kin, Smart (2007) argues that relatedness does not necessarily mean being related through blood. People may have relationships with others who are not kin, but who occupy the same place in emotional, cultural, locational and personal senses.

- *The self and the emotions*

The body experiences the world through the senses, and this includes emotions. Emotions are seen as troublesome, and out of our control, akin to the unconscious. We are expected to manage our emotions by disciplining the self, and carrying out self-surveillance (eg Rose, 1989). There have been recent moves in sociology to consider the emotional and relational dimensions that are meaningful in everyday life, with regard to relationships and families (eg Smart, 2007); and some have written about maternal emotions, for example Parker (1995/2005) has written about the love and hate that a child can engender in a mother. Audience research has explored the emotions of people in experiencing popular culture such as soap operas and magazines. The psychosocial approach has legitimatised the emotions and the unconscious as a topic of study, and emotions have been used in helping researchers to interpret data (eg Walkerdine, Lucey, Melody, 2001). Art, including photographs, can transmit and stimulate emotions. Although considered trite and banal, family photographs are also emotionally resonant objects Rose (2004).

Emotions have also been addressed in bodies of work that consider emotional labour, and emotional capital. Rather than directly shedding light on how the self is conceived, instead these two concepts – emotional capital, and emotional labour – describe practices that tend to be carried out by women. Emotional labour was first written about by Hochschild, in 1983, when talking about jobs that required emotional labour, for example air hostesses, employees who are required to produce an emotional state in another person, such as gratitude. It is also considered that women invest large amounts of emotional labour in maintaining

personal relationships (Giddens 2001). This is sometimes referred to as the invisible labours of women in the home or at work (Gardiner, 1997). The term emotional capital has been developed from Bourdieu's work, understood to be the emotional resources passed on from mother to child through processes of parental involvement (Reay, 2000). Emotional capital is generally considered to be something possessed more by women, than by men. Emotional capital is the capacity to connect, involving acts, intentions and statements:

"it refers to moral thinking about personal connects and intimate life, related to the self and others. It is an essential ingredient for a reflexive self" (Silva, 2000, p 4).

There are also practices in everyday life associated with emotions. From a societal point of view, there are emotions invested in the idea of family, and which sustain the ideology of family. There are emotions invested in the idea of home (Blunt and Dowling, 2006); in the notion of a family meal; and emotions associated with food, such as in gift giving. When talking about material culture, there is also the notion of an emotional relationship between the individual and the object (Dant 2005).

Consideration of the emotions can help us to better theorise the self. However, whilst the word emotions has been used to describe certain ideas, such as emotional capital, emotional labour; and the idea of emotions being invested into certain institutions such as the family meal, it seems that there have only been recent calls in sociology to study individuals, and the family, with regard to emotions (Smart, 2007), and how they deal with, and experience these emotions.

- *The self and the imaginary*

How individuals believe society, and other individuals, to be, is related to the concept of the imaginary. For example, we encounter families in popular culture, such as in magazines and on TV, where specific ideals of families or assumptions about family life are reproduced. These take a place in our imagination, and become families that we live by (Smart, 2007). Smart suggests that whilst these inhabit our imaginations, they "constantly impinge upon our actual routine practices" (p 51). Thus she argues that it is as important to explore those families and relationships which exist in our imaginings and memories, since these are just as real.

I consider that these three, additional ways of understanding personal life, and identity, are all intimate ways of theorising the self. Intimacy has been the recent focus of certain authors, such as Giddens and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (Gabb, 2008). Such writers on intimacy tend to focus on adult, and often sexual relationships (Gillies, 2003). However, my definition of an intimate self draws more on Smart's notions of embeddedness and connectedness with others, the imaginary and the emotions, and I consider that it is an ideal lens through which to examine maternal practices. I also consider that a focus on the intimate can be a useful counterpoint to the rather more impersonal way that the everyday has been theorised with its focus on the structures of society. Considering the self from the viewpoint of personal and intimate lives, as well as poststructural notions of the self, the tools that I draw on to understand individuals are nearly all here. However, before I move on to discuss my research approach in the next chapter, I wish to briefly discuss another way of considering identity, drawing on the idea of practices, and performance.

I have already shown how Felski (1999-2000) described the everyday as repetitive. She considered that this repetition is related to the formation of identity, that we

become who we are through acts of repetition. Thus our identity is formed out of a distinctive blend of behavioural and emotional patterns, repeated over time. This idea of identity shares characteristics with Judith Butler's (2000) idea of performativity, and that identity is constituted by the acts carried out by individuals. This perception of identity with its focus on practices, relates to the idea of Morgan's family practices, that I introduced when I discussed theories on the everyday. These are theories that I will draw on, as I discuss the data generated in my study, data that emerged from talking from mothers about their everyday practices.

Finally, a focus on practices and feelings indicates an approach to understanding motherhood that looks in depth at what mothers do (Stadlen, 2004); a reconsideration of mundane practices (Young, 2006); and a phenomenological and personal exploration of motherhood (Baraitser, 2008). A focus on the intimate, and on practices, suggests an understanding of motherhood as sensual – where practices and feelings meet.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have considered how the everyday, and the self has been theorised, and the place of research on motherhood and the domestic space within this. For the purposes of this thesis I consider the everyday to be those activities and thoughts that people do not normally narrate, (eg putting on the washing, going to the photocopier), and which can be represented by photographs. Yet I am interested in the relationship between personal narratives (as captured in interviews) and practices (as captured in pictures). In my research I aim to look at the everyday lives of a small group of mothers from the viewpoint of the individuals. I consider that the everyday can be explored by looking at micro processes and meanings. I also consider that individuals are implicated in wide social and cultural processes and consider them as expressed through their

individuality. Even if individuals dispute categories such as class, race and gender identity, they still have to negotiate their social meanings in daily life.

Carol Smart contends that sociology tends to concentrate on society, leaving individuals to psychology (2007). She suggests that whenever everyday lives are looked at in sociology, they are theorised using social theories, with little regard to the concerns of the everyday people. Sociology, she suggests, feels that 'interiorities' can be too parochial. My research is in line with Smart's project to make personal meanings sociologically important. My aim in this thesis is to find a way that captures the mundane, which takes personal meanings seriously, and connects personal lives to social structures. My conception of the everyday, is that it is about the mundane rather than about the spectacular – and this influences my chosen methodology, which I outline in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

In this thesis I develop a thematic analysis, drawing on data about the everyday activities of 20 mothers. The data, generated in 2006 and 2007, consists of observations and reflexive fieldnotes; pictures taken by the women in my study, and their talk about them; as well as other talk not generated by photographs. This is not the research design that I set out with, but one that evolved through the process of unsuccessfully attempting to conduct a participant observation ethnographic study of mothering practices. In this chapter I tell the story of how my final research design was eventually secured, and I outline and contextualise the key methods of data generation that I employed. I consider my methods of data analysis in some detail as well as reflecting on the challenges of representing the mundane practices of mothering. However before I begin this account I map the epistemological frameworks which have influenced my research, and make a case for the importance of a reflexive and auto-biographical approach to the study of the personal and the everyday.

An ethnographic stance to the personal:

“In order to practise the ‘sociological imagination’ we must be aware that values are involved in the selection of the problems we study and be certain of the key conceptions we use in our formulation of these problems”.

(Wright Mills, 2002/1959: p 78).

I begin with this quote as I consider what we choose to investigate is determined by the way in which we perceive the world (Green, 1993). This is why, before outlining my research design in detail, it is important to outline my epistemology.

Auto/biography

Our own beliefs and experiences are the lens through which we look at the world, and determine how we interpret what we see, which includes our epistemologies. I began researching motherhood in the years leading up to my doctoral studies, driven by my desire to understand my own complicated feelings about mothering. This meant that I was naturally gravitating towards an auto/biographical approach, meaning, that when we read, or write, our own autobiographies cannot help but intercede (Stanley 1992), and that we make sense of what is written, by comparing it to our own experiences and feelings. An auto/biographical approach is associated with the reflexive turn, researchers situating themselves in their writing through autobiographical accounts and personal narratives. This recognizes the fact that the researcher's social position shapes the research process, relationships with informants, and their representation and interpretation of the social world in question.

Although I researched 20 mothers, there are 21 mothers in this study – I am one of them and I cannot be ignored, especially if I am selecting what story I tell about them. My issues about mothering will have guided me to select certain themes and certain fragments of data, and led me to read certain literatures. My personal circumstances will have affected who I chose to recruit, my disposition towards them, my responses to their words, and how I interpret their words. My particular circumstances as a mother will also have been influential, living in the East Midlands in a suburban village, the mother of two school-age boys, juggling the care of mothering with my doctoral studies, not ignoring the fact that my mother unexpectedly died halfway through my research.

Auto/biographical accounts came into prominence in academia with feminism, feminist writers considering that autobiographies were needed to document and valorise women's own experiences (Mies, 1993). Feminist writers (Mies, 1993;

Cosslett, Lury, and Summerfield, 2000) have argued for a writing of women's history and experiences, as a resource in creating women's knowledge. I too am interested in the personal, and in documenting what is important to women – their everyday lives. I am also a woman, who is researching women's lives, and my auto/biographical approach is similar to feminist approaches. Despite these similarities between my research and feminist research, I did not set out to conduct feminist research. Women researching women are not necessarily feminist researchers, as Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) point out. However, my approach is consistent with feminist methodologies that are concerned with intimate methods, and a focus on neglected areas of women's lives.

A narrative and discursive approach

In the previous chapter, I discussed the notion of the biography of the self – that individuals carry out biographical work, telling themselves stories about who they are, to help them make sense of their lives. A narrative methodology can be used in research, treating and analysing interviews as stories. This approach is complemented by discursive methods, which consider how individuals make use of language in their talk. Such an approach uses the concept of subject positions, an acting with a discourse, which is

“the place or character an individual can construct for themselves using discourses and particular recognised positions.” Cooper and Kaye (2002, p 101).

I do not see that there is a radical disjunction between personal narratives and mundane practices, in that the repertoire of activities that a mother carries out in caring for her children, can be considered a “discourse”, and that a particular maternal identity is established through the activities a woman carries out. Foucault for example argues to treat discourses

“as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak (1972, p 48-9).

Consequently mothers create a subject position for themselves in relation to the discourses about motherhood, positioning themselves as the subject of particular discourses, and acting them out in particular ways. As a result, maternal identity is constituted by the activities mothers do – those they choose to do, those they choose not to do, and the meanings they give those activities. Both these approaches question the nature of truth –that there is not one “truth” to be found in research, but that accounts are co-constructed between interviewer and participant. This means treating the interviews as performances (Finnegan, 1997).

Ethnography

I began my doctoral studies with a commitment to ethnography, and continued this ethnographic stance through my research, including data generation and writing. Ethnography begins with the experiences of people to formulate theories, rather than choosing theories and applying those theories to people’s lived experiences. Phenomena are studied in their natural settings, and the method bears a close resemblance to the routine ways in which people make sense of the world in everyday life (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983/2005). The search for universal laws is downplayed in favour of detailed accounts of the concrete experience of life within a particular culture. In addition, an ethnographic approach can mean a commitment to contextualising data. Hermes (1995) describes her research as ethnographic interviewing, because she was trying to understand how people understood magazines, in the contexts of their lives. I consider that ethnography is more of a commitment to a particular philosophy, rather than carrying out the nuts and bolts of the method.

Phenomenology

In the previous chapter I considered how phenomenology had theorised the everyday, and it has been used in various research approaches. It has similarities with an ethnographic approach, with a commitment to description over explanation,

and a search for concrete data details of a person's lived situation (Linda Finlay, 1999). I cannot claim that my methodology is phenomenological, because I discovered this method after I had already started generating data. However, there were some similarities between my research and phenomenological research: an immersion in other's lives; paying attention to the senses, as I was doing in my fieldnotes and photographs. It can also be a useful framework for looking at and conceptualising practices.

Setting out to study the everyday, and the personal, meant a search for the right methodologies, and I draw on all those I outline above, to help me answer my research questions. As I will show later, this mixture of approaches means that my research has produced a particular type of data, that is characterised by intimacy. This means not only a way of researching that enables close proximity with participants, but also provides personal accounts – those of my participants and my own.

Defining terms

Before explaining how I came to my final research design and justifying the methods employed, it is important to define what I mean by various terms. I consider motherhood to mean the state of being a mother, a social category that lasts over a certain period of time. I consider mothering to mean the act of carrying out the role of being a mother. I consider practice to mean a usual or customary action, one that is repeated, and the exercise of motherhood. I consider activity to be a more generic term to cover the things that mothers do during the day, in their role as mothers.

Developing a research design - a journey

Having outlined my approaches to carrying out research, I now return to the beginning of my research story by considering the ideas I brought to my doctoral

research; how I explored various ways of researching motherhood; and how I came to my final design.

For my Masters research I had carried out a textual analysis of parenting and childcare literature, mapping discourses of motherhood. My conclusion from this work was that a 'common-sense' discourse of good motherhood could be identified, which might be hard to resist (Sanderson-Mann, 2005). This research left me with various questions, such as how mothers negotiated the discourses I had identified, and how they crafted their own version of motherhood. I felt that I needed to carry out research to account for the individual within discourses, to find the place of magazines and advice in their lives, and to contextualise the parenting texts. This move from textual analysis to a more contextualised research was consistent with a trend within media studies, where there was an increasing emphasis on the context of reception, and an interest in the natural settings within which media are used (Morley and Silverstone 1991, McRobbie 1991).

At an early stage of my study I felt that ethnography would be the best research approach to use, to study motherhood. I planned to spend time with mothers, looking at what they did when they looked after their children. In order to explore the feasibility of this approach I carried out pilot participant observations with three acquaintances during 2006. For the first set of observations I spent time with a friend and her son, during three separate occasions: in her home, and on two separate shopping trips. Carrying out subsequent observations with a second mother, Emma, enabled me to contrast the two women and their practices. These initial observations were extremely productive, enabling me to see maternal practices as an 'acting out' of expert discourses. The pilot observations also revealed how I observed – my fieldnotes were a reflexive account of what makes a 'good' mother, comparing my own behaviour with my friend's – an auto/biographical stance.

The pilot observations were generative in a number of ways. They shifted the focus of my analysis from discourse to practice, they revealed the potential for a reflexive and auto/biographical element to the process of data generation and analysis, and they helped me envisage a feasible scale for the study. At this stage I was planning a small but intensive study, observing just three mothers over the course of a year. I was planning to explore changes over time, and to build up a rich and in-depth data set.

However, the pilot observations also raised some difficulties for me with the observational method. The status of ethnography, and issues of boundaries and transgressions, and the vulnerability of the observer, have been written about in ethnography, especially in auto ethnography, and feminist work. Simultaneously occupying the position of researcher and friend made me extremely uncomfortable. Such positions can cause conflict (Stacey, 1988), and stress (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983/2005). Being simultaneously in two worlds, participation and researcher means that the researcher can feel constantly insecure, experiencing divided loyalties, and feelings of betrayal. It can mean a tension between getting involved, or to standing behind the role of researcher (Behar, 1996); and getting involved means transgressing the normal boundaries between researcher and researched. Leaving the field too can be emotional, for the for the researcher and the researched, and the researcher can feel that they are being exploitative in offering friendship in return for data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983/2005).

I struggled with the role of observer, and inserting, then extricating myself from people's lives. I was experiencing difficulties with the dual roles of researcher and friend. It was difficult to know where the boundaries were, and I was extremely uncomfortable writing (in the form of fieldnotes) about the two women, who were either my friends, or were becoming my friends. Whilst the method was causing me problems, which I was not able to understand or articulate until much later, I

persevered with my plans, believing it would be a productive method, providing rich data and enabling me to find out how other mothers mothered, away from public arenas.

The last of the three pilot observations proved to be the final nail in the coffin for this method. Again, I found it hard negotiating access. I had only carried out one observation when we had to stop, because the woman's baby had fallen ill and had to be hospitalised. Watching her care for her baby brought my emotions to the surface, during the observation. Later I realised that this was something to do with age of the baby, and the intensity of the encounter, the sole focus watching a woman taking care of a child. It incited my feelings about being a mother and being mothered. Reflecting back on my notes written at the time I can see that the intimacy of these observational methods was making me feel very vulnerable.

At this point it seemed that all I had been working towards for nearly a year, had fallen apart. For reasons I did not understand at the time, I seemed unable to observe mothers. I had to redesign my research, to find a method which would provide the answers to my research questions in the most effective and efficient way. Part of this process involved identifying what I had learned from the observations. I had discovered that each mother was unique in their perception of their maternal identity, and how they practised being a mother. I realised that being a mother was constituted by the activities that mothers do (those they choose to do, and those they choose not do to); and that activity choice appeared to be related to engagement with expert voices; and the negotiation of discourses bound up with identity.

Looking back, I had encountered many drawbacks to this particular method. I felt uncomfortable writing critical comments about acquaintances; and using my own personal networks to recruit mothers had an impact on my private life, and made

me unhappy. Access into people's homes and their private lives was not an easy task. Mothers who were asked to participate were often too busy to imagine having any spare time to be able to take part. In addition, it seemed that women themselves did not want their mothering to be subject to such close scrutiny. These issues of privacy and access have been documented by others, Gabb (2008) for example, finding it difficult to find families who were willing to be observed in the homes. My series of observations revealed that carrying out intimate research can demand a lot from the researcher, sometimes too much. However, it seems that my experience is not unusual, and that the trying out of various methods, before abandoning them, is consistent with an ethnographic approach. In the next section I describe how I reformulated my research design, by drawing on an activity I had been practising during my research: photography.

From observation to visual methods

There has been a long tradition of using photographs in ethnography, and anthropology, and photography had been a thread running through my research, from its early stages. I was planning to use photographs in my ethnographic work, so whilst I was also carrying out the observations, I had also taken photographs of my own family practices to see what they could reveal, and to test how useful they would be. Presenting work in progress to others, such as academics and postgraduate students can aid and change understanding of data (Brunsdon, 2003). As part of a regular group supervision practice, I shared some of my photographs with fellow students and supervisors and found that they acted as productive triggers for conversation about my own and others' maternal practices, eliciting memories of the women's own mothering, or of their childhood. Here are three of those images:



I was struck by the way the these images facilitated the kind of 'talk' that I had struggled to enable in my pilot interviews. I realised that the photographs could be rich ethnographic material in their own right, as well as operating as generative prompts for conversation.

With the support of my supervisors I began the process of re-designing my research around the technique of photo-elicitation. I wanted to ask mothers to take photographs of things or events that represented them as a mother. Asking the mothers to take their own photographs, meant that I would be focusing on what was important to the mothers, rather than what was important to me in the observations. With the photographs, I would be seeing the world through their eyes. I would not be relying on their verbal accounts alone, but would have visual data to draw on too. I would then invite the mothers to talk in interviews about what these photographs showed, relating to their maternal practices. I now had my method.

The final piece of my research design came when I had the opportunity to work with multimedia performance artists as part of an Open University methods festival in 2007. As part of this collaboration I designed an interactive exploration of motherhood, providing visual and sensual elements to convey a sense of what motherhood felt like, based on the data I had already generated. My aim was for people to experience what I and other mothers experienced, something that could not be achieved by simply showing photographs, and made use of the senses.

Focusing on the senses and embodied practices with auto/biographical and intimate everyday objects, my installation in simplistic terms represented the different epistemological and design features of my research, and helped me to identify the theoretical tools I required.

The final research design

As part of refocusing my research design I revised my research questions as follows:

1. What mothering activities do women engage in, and choose to show to an outsider (the researcher)?
2. Which maternal practices do they choose to carry out, and which do they choose not to carry out?
3. Considering their maternal practices, how do mothers engage with expert voices?
4. How do women perceive their identity as mothers, what are the different subject-positions available?
5. How does motherhood manifest itself in individual mothers and what is the difference between the images of motherhood that have become stereotypic in our culture and how the mothers portray themselves and their lives?
6. Is it possible to represent someone's world pictorially, to let the pictures do the talking and for that to mean something to the viewer?
7. Is it possible for someone to do that who is not photographically trained?

The primary method that I would use to answer these questions was the photo-elicitation interview – which would involve asking mothers to take, and then talk about, photographs that represented their everyday activities. The focus on practices, and photography were both inspired from the observations I had carried out earlier.

In this section I describe my sample and my methods of recruitment. I outline the visual methods I used, and describe how I carried out the interviews, as well as describing the character and distinctiveness of the data generated by my research.

A local mothering culture: my sample

Consistent with my original plan to conduct a in-depth ethnography, my revised research design had a strong auto/biographical element, in that to some extent I was researching mothers like me. Bourdieu (1999) has reflected on the value of reducing the distance between the understandings of the researcher and the researched, but as my experiment with participant observation demonstrated, such closeness can also be very uncomfortable. My approach to generating this sample of women was to avoid women that I knew, while also recruiting women from what was a familiar local mothering culture.

I was looking to research mothers of at least one child under the age of five, a period of development I was just coming out of, with my own sons. I recruited mothers by talking to women at toddler groups in my local area; asking friends if they knew anyone who would want to take part, and using the snowball method. My recruitment strategy had an impact on my sample characteristics - recruiting at toddler groups meant it was unlikely that I would recruit mothers who worked full time. As I planned to consider the meanings of individual mothers in-depth, this meant that I was not looking for a large sample.

Toddlers groups are considered an opportunity for mothers to relax and to meet other mothers, which meant that they were a good place for me to meet and talk to other mothers. In my area, there were many toddler groups to choose from. To find them, I looked at village notice boards, on the internet, and in local papers, and also used my own local knowledge of toddler groups from when my son was

younger. I targeted "poorer" areas, however, this did not necessarily mean that the mothers I chose were poor - not all the mothers who attended a particular group came from that area. Attendance was fluid and might change weekly. The groups were varied, some were quite small with people who all knew each other, all from the same community; whereas others were large and well organised, women having travelled miles to attend. There were quite a few mothers there who had careers, but who maybe had a day off, and would attend the group.

Recruitment consisted of me talking to the mothers as a group (which did not work very well); and later, talking to mothers individually - although this meant that I was not always able to talk to all of the mothers. I tended to introduce myself as a student, considering this to be an unthreatening role to assume. In the room there were often barriers in the shape of chairs, fencing off dedicated areas for babies; and there were sometimes invisible barriers too, as some of the women made it difficult for me to talk to them, moving around to avoid me.

Talking to the women, I described my research, and showed them the images I had taken of my own maternal activities. Showing them my photographs gave them an idea of what I was looking for as well as acting like my calling card, letting them know what I was like as a mother, and that they could trust me. Sometimes the women were 'checking me out' (Almack, 2008), as through our general conversation we revealed our values about mothering, and they would try to find out what research I was doing, and why. This initial contact was like an interview, and they were perhaps evaluating me more than I was evaluating them. I found that the mothers who engaged with my project were more likely to be like me. It seemed to be indefinable what captured their interest and made them want to take part. Some women initially agreed to take part, but later dropped out. I never found out why, but it might have been because they found the task too hard, and did not wish their mothering to be scrutinised by my research. The task may have

also appeared too time consuming – some said they did not take part because they said they were too busy.

The women in my study all lived in the East Midlands, mainly centred around a market town of approximately 38,000 inhabitants, and its surrounding areas. However, they did not come from what is considered to be a discrete geographical area, Townsend (2006) suggesting that the East Midlands has always lacked a coherent and consistent identity as a region. The area is characterised by a long line of suburban development, with little to define the end of one town, and the beginning of another. Although most of the mothers did not know each other, they shopped at the same supermarket, or attended the same toddler groups, and they probably travelled along the same roads. Whilst the mothers in my sample all lived within a few miles of each other, for each of them the place will have had different meanings. Apart from one woman, all the mothers in my research had either never moved away from the area in which they grew up, or had moved back to the area, and some had frequent contact with their own parents, who were sometimes involved in helping them with childcare. All had chosen a particular kind of motherhood, consisting of giving up or reducing their working hours, and were mainly responsible for the chores and looking after the children during the day. Thus the women I interviewed most likely shared some broader values or at the very least encountered each other in child-related social situations –in short these women belonged to a common culture of localised mothering of which I was also part.

My sample consists of 20 mothers in total (discounting the third mother I had observed); their ages ranged from 19 to 43 (mean age 33.2), meaning that at 45, I was older than all them. Their mean age when they first gave birth was approximately 28.4 years, close to the mean age of 29.3 years for giving birth in the UK (2007). Three women described themselves as single mothers. There were

40 children altogether, and 18 were girls. Children's ages ranged from 12 weeks to 17 years, and nine children were over five years old. Mean number of children per woman was two, a little higher than the 2007 average of 1.9. However, this figure covered a range of children from one per mother, to five.

The women in my study were not representative of the UK population as a whole. For example, five had been, or were working as nurses, and my sample was also unusual in that it contained two groups of twins, and a group of triplets. Some of their own mothers had died a year or so before the interviews took place, or the women were estranged from their mothers, and I considered that this comprised an unusually large number of women.

I found it hard to determine class, instead noting the women's qualifications; their jobs and those of their partners; the areas where they lived and size of their homes. Nine of the women worked part-time, although this covered a wide range of hours worked (one to three days), and type of work – two women were self employed. Qualifications ranged from GCSEs and NVQ level 3, to MSc. Although all the mothers lived in suburban or urban areas, the areas varied in whether they were "good" or poor areas. The mothers' houses varied, some had two bedrooms, three or four. Four were rented, two of which were owned by housing associations, and lived in by two of the single mothers. Houses ranged from terraced through to detached, the majority were semi-detached, although their size varied.

Researching maternal practice through visual methods

"When two or more people discuss the meaning of photographs they try to figure out something together. This is, I believe, an ideal model for research"
(Harper, 2002, p 23).

This quotation reveals why I consider using photographs to be an excellent way of researching my research questions. My chosen method of using photographs is

both photo voice, where participants take photographs; and photo-elicitation, or photo-interviewing - the method of using photographs in interviews, using them as a tool to generate accounts and encourage communication. Increasingly the two methods are used together: participants take photographs to communicate a particular story, and are then interviewed about them. It is considered that using photovoice reveals much about the photographer's identity (Ziller, 1990) and that perhaps more of the self is revealed through photographs (Holliday, 2004), than by interview alone. Using images can enable the exploration of public and private worlds; and help in the construction and defining of identities (Woodley-Baker, 2009). In addition, taking photographs encourages reflection, not only of what to take, but also what sort of story the participants wants to tell. Indeed, this was true for one of my participants, Lisa, who related how taking photographs made her realise that there were many activities of motherhood that she did not like, and it made her reflect on what she did like about being a mother.

Photovoice is also consistent with an ethnographic approach as it provides details of the person's concrete lived situation, as taking photographs makes the individual look at things they wouldn't normally look at, such as the mundane (Hodgetts, Chamberlain and Radley, 2007). Photographs can also be useful to record things that are difficult to articulate such as emotions (Keats, 2009). Images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words as they are processed by different parts of the brain (Harper, 2002). Thus photo elicitation not only elicits more information, but a different kind of information. It has also been suggested that when a researcher uses visual methods, that this encourages them to slow down and focus their observations (Prosser, 2008). To me, this is also an argument for a phenomenological way of seeing.

I asked the women I recruited to take twelve photographs of objects or events that represented them as a mother, and the things they did as a mother, with a focus

on everyday activities – those they enjoyed, those they didn't enjoy, and what they did for themselves (see information leaflet in appendix). I stressed that I did not want family album style photographs, and I showed them some photographs that represented my mothering activities, to give them an idea of what I was looking for. These photographs also demonstrated how they could take photographs of their children without showing their faces, to ensure anonymity. Restricting the women to 12 photographs meant that they had to reflect and prioritise, concentrating on what was most important to them. Once they had taken the photographs, I arranged for two sets to be printed, one for them to keep, and one for me; and I took them to the interviews.

Most of the women used their own digital camera, or I lent them mine; and two used their own film cameras. Using digital cameras meant that the women had control over the editing of the photographs. Each mother engaged with the project in her own way, making it her own. Some found it hard to take 12 images, others took 20 or more. Some took close up photographs of objects, other photographs resembled those taken for family albums – such as days out to the zoo. When they were taking the pictures I was their imagined audience, and they were using their knowledge of me as a researcher, mother and woman to imagine how I would respond to their images. Sometimes they would give me the photographs saying "I hope they are what you wanted", suggesting a lack of confidence with them, yet they appeared to be pleased that someone was taking an interest in their lives.

I interviewed the women in their homes, and the interview was recorded and transcribed. Sometimes a child, or partner was also present, although their participation in the interview was minimal. I interviewed the mothers once, the shortest interview taking 45 minutes, the longest about two and a half hours. The focus of the interview was the photographs they had taken. Often, there was a sequence in the photographs, the women choosing to narrate them in a particular

order. Like Hodgetts, Chamberlain and Radley (2007) we also discussed photographs they wanted to take, but were unable to, the women often volunteering this information themselves. I sometimes referred to a topic guide (see appendix), but questions were fluid, as the photographs were the starting point. At the end of the interview I asked them to describe themselves as mothers, and to show me their favourite, and least favourite photograph. During my fieldwork, the focus of my questions shifted slightly, earlier I was interested in how they negotiated expert discourses, later on I was interested in how they connected with other mothers at toddler groups, for example. This is consistent with a bottom up approach, which uses early interviews to provide questions for subsequent interviews (Ziebland and McPherson, 2006).

The character and distinctiveness of the data

In summary, my data consisted of fieldnotes; photographs taken by mothers, and interview transcripts. This meant that there were many levels of data – the mothers' understanding of their mothering practices; their representation to a public; their narration of it; and my reflections on it. In this section I reflect on the character and distinctiveness of the data.

I researched a group of women who were part of a common culture of localised mothering, of which I was part. Participants like to be able to situate the interviewer, through this they understand the research relationship and use that 'knowledge' to frame their responses (Riach, 2009). To the women in my study, I was a student and also a mother. They might also have viewed me as an parenting expert, and someone who was judging their mothering activities. This meant that their images, and the interview, provided an opportunity for each mother to display notions of 'good' or 'appropriate' mothering. Through their visual and verbal accounts they were performing motherhood, and were carrying out presentation of self. Whilst I understood that the photographs and talk reflected the women's

concerns, I was also aware that in taking and showing me the photographs the women were engaging in impression management, concerned to present themselves as 'good mothers'. For example, one woman, Helen, took many photographs to represent "nice" times with her son, to produce what she considered to be a balanced account of the good and bad aspects of being a mother.

I considered the interviews as narratives, the mothers were telling me a story, through their photographs and words, of what motherhood was like for them, at that time. Narratives are social practices, and are sequentially managed. Whilst there are routine and socioculturally shaped ways of telling, narrative structures are also dynamic and evolving responses to recurring rhetorical situations. This suggests that narratives are emergent, a joint venture and the outcome of negotiation by interlocutors (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008).

Sometimes, a woman would give me a particular performance of motherhood in her photographs, and then undermine it with her narrative, feeling perhaps that they were able to reveal the shameful and private in their talk. May (2008) considers that in interviews, personal narratives can be a way of cleansing, for example offering a justification why one has breached a social norm. Compared to writing life stories, for example, women presented a more ambivalent picture of motherhood, compared to writing, and reflected morality through reflecting on dilemmas. In the space provided by the interview, subject positions were produced.

I used various strategies in the interviews, to elicit data. I sometimes introduced (anonymously) another mother into the conversation, someone I had interviewed earlier, giving examples of her behaviour, which they would then comment on. At times I talked about my own mothering activities. Occasionally I engaged in active

reflection, reflecting back what they told me, with some interpretation, which meant they had the opportunity to comment on my interpretation.

I used various ways to encourage the women to explain more about their activities.

For example, showing me this photograph of laundry in a basket by her washing

machine, Anne related how she put all the dirty clothes in the washing machine straightaway, and turned the machine on when it was full. She then briefly talked about how she dried her washing, and her ironing. A pause followed, when neither of us knew what to say next. I



then asked her whether she separated her coloureds and whites, and asked her in more detail about how she dried her washing. By doing this, Anne understood that I wanted to hear more about the mundane details of her everyday life.

The photographs were productive in generating data. Photographs allowed me access to spaces in the home denied within an interview, and the women's images showed things that are not normally narrated, such as the loading and unloading of a dishwasher. The photographs also allowed for a rich description of the mothers' everyday lives. Although I, and the mothers I interviewed, shared the same cultural background, the photographs did not make sense to me in the same way as the mother, this meant that when we discussed them, the meaning was not taken for granted, and the mother had to explain to me what each photograph meant. Thus I gained a good understanding of what the activities meant to her. However, at the same time there was a lot of assumed, shared knowledge, and an acknowledgement of a common sense understanding – I understood the mother's talk and photos because of our shared culture. All the mothers knew that I was a

mother, and also had ideas about what sort of mother I was, because I had shown them my photos that represented my mothering.

Analysis and writing

Analysis and writing were concurrent, and I consider them together in this section, along with any issues associated with this stage. In this section I describe the activities I carried out to identify various emergent themes. I show how analysing and representing the different types of data was productive in generating rich accounts – how the different data combined produced more than the sum of its parts. I have anonymised names and identifying details, including the photographs.

My analysis took into account various levels of representation, as I first of all considered the data at face value, that the women's images and talk represented their concerns as mothers. Second, I looked beyond their words, considering the imagery they used, to consider their emotions, as well as how they managed their accounts to largely present themselves to me as 'good mothers'. Third, I considered the photographs and accounts, as narratives, and I considered how the women used the available narratives, to take up certain subject positions. Finally, I also looked for silences and absences in their stories – some women did not take photographs of food, for example, and I considered why this might be so.

Familiarising myself with the data

The interviews were transcribed, either by myself, or by a professional transcriber. To the transcripts, I added non verbal data such as pauses, ums, ers and laughing and also considered tone of voice, for example whether the person sounded sad or happy. I then explored the data in various ways, which I likened to a process of 'getting to know' each woman. I asked various questions of the data. For example, what story was this woman trying to tell; what was important to her as a mother; and how did she cope with being a mother. As I read through the transcripts I tried

to get a feel for what each woman did every day. As time went on, I compared them to each other, and with myself. Later, I supplemented this information with the photographs that they had taken. At the same time I was reading and re-reading the interview transcripts, looking for repetition and contradiction, and using the constant comparative method developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to identify emerging themes.

Developing sensitising concepts

After I had developed some initial themes, I selected all the data related to that theme from each transcript, and put it in a separate word document. This enabled me to retain the context, showing how the conversation meandered from one theme to another. I then considered how each woman talked about each theme, paying attention to the language they used. I also used the OSOP ('one sheet of paper') method described by Ziebland and McPherson (2006). This involved writing down all the different themes and issues on a single piece of paper. I then carried out axial coding, grouping them into larger themes. As I was writing, I returned again and again to the transcripts, for added illumination and for new insights.

To help me to interpret the data, I drew on academic literature, and general reading of newspapers, novels and magazine articles (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983/2005). I presented my data at conferences and seminars, which helped to clarify my thoughts, and sometimes provided new interpretations of my data. I also used myself and my autobiographical accounts, my concerns and issues with the topics. This meant I could use my own experiences to understand what they were saying, and to fill in the gaps (McCracken 1988). Initially in my development of themes I focused on the activities represented in the photographs and in the women's talk. However, I found sensitising concepts to be a more useful way of organising the wide range of activities that mothers carried out, and found that themes such as space, time and materiality largely encompassed all the activities.

In segmenting the data in this way, my aim was to tell a coherent story that was faithful to the women's own stories about mothering. At a later stage, I looked for common themes across my data chapters, to help me develop my overall argument.

To cope with the large amount of data generated by my research, I focused first on the interview transcripts, and later considered the photographs and the text together. I analysed the photographs in a similar way to the written transcripts by sorting them into categories, and comparing photographs within categories, which allowed themes to emerge. I also scrutinised the photographs in great detail. This allowed me to see details which were not apparent during the interview (Grady, 2004; Chaplin, 2005). When I looked at a certain photograph, I tried to step into the women's shoes, using my imagination, and I immersed myself in the photographs, for the meaning and the emotional overtones to emerge (Ziller, 1990). Photographs are polysemic (Barthes, 1982), capable of generating multiple meanings, and the photographs were sometimes productive in generating different themes to those I identified from the interview transcripts. Some photographs seemed to be at odds with the mother's narrative, suggesting that the photograph articulated an alternative account, or a counter narrative. Counter narratives are those stories which people tell and live, which offer resistance, either implicitly or explicitly, to dominant cultural narratives. Andrews (2002) suggests that photographs can function as counter-narratives by their content, photographing those moments and/or objects which exist, but are invisible.

My analysis reflects the diversity of experiences in my aim to represent a wide range of perspectives and experiences (Ziebland and McPherson, 2006). Making use of my fieldnotes as well as the interviews, I have tended to summarise my data, and only quote the women's words directly in short sections, which means that there is a pull towards the narrativisation of data. Summarising is a large part of

analysing and presenting interview data. Sometimes I felt it was important to state how many of the women in my study expressed something. However, as I show in the following chapters, at other times I have chosen a case study approach, to focus on one particular woman, if I considered that her story was particularly illustrative of a certain theme. This is the 'telling case' described by Papen (2008), the potential of a single story to evoke insights and questions. I realised that if someone's story was striking to me, then other people would feel it too.

In the presentation of my data I wished to convey the concrete lived experience of the women I researched, however, this sometimes involved the senses and the unspoken, or that which was un-writable. Everyday life can be hard to represent, and I consider that using an additional mode of representation such as the visual can go some way to ameliorating the representativeness of an account. This means that for the following four data chapters, I have presented a mixture of images and words. Words and photographs together can be very powerful, Berger and Mohr (1989) considering that words are enriched by a photograph. The images are data in their own right, and are presented in support of the argument in the text. I consider that using images adds multivocality to the final text (Hurdley, 2007), and replicates the different dimensions of everyday life. Thus the photographs need to be read, alongside the text, and I invite the reader to linger on the visual before moving on to the words. I would like the reader them to pause and enter the images, to slow their pace and to imagine.

By presenting the photographs in the text, the mothers are speaking directly to the reader, rather than their words being mediated by me. However, this can pose problems of interpretation, presenting the photographs in the text as they were printed, they have not been subject to the same interpretation as my participants' words. Using photographs also enabled me to retain the notion of the individual in my research (Pink, 2001). One photograph of one child's bedroom, could only be a

photograph of that particular bedroom, with its unique mix of objects. However, the photographs are also a documentation of contemporary mothering culture, and by seeing the photos en masse, it is possible to gain a more universal view of motherhood, as similarities appear.

In this section I have described how I carried out analysis, and how I generated the themes that I present in the following data chapters. I have also discussed problems of representation, as well as arguing that using visual methods within a written document are a good way of conveying the nature of what I have been researching. In the following section I deliberate on the methods I have used, and discuss how I have ensured that my interpretations are valid and robust.

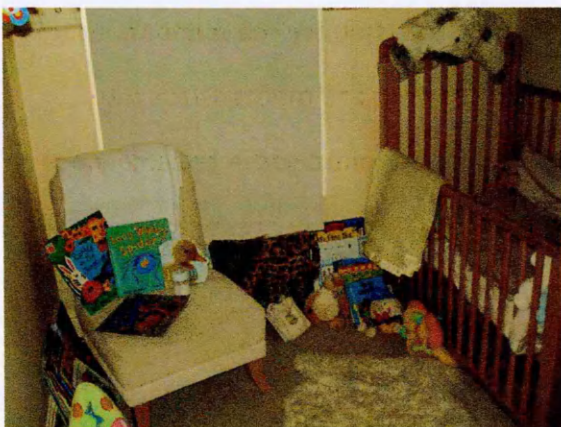
Rigorous research and ethics

In this section I provide some reflections on the methods I have chosen. This includes considerations of how it is possible to ensure rigour in qualitative research; steps I have taken to ensure that I have carried out my research in an ethical way, and presented it in an ethical way too.

Rigour can be understood in terms of reliability and validity, however, it has been argued that these concepts are not always appropriate to qualitative research. Nevertheless, I engaged in various activities to ensure that my research and my findings were robust. This included choosing the appropriate methods for my research questions; choosing a sample that meant different perspectives could be identified; carrying out the research consistently; and giving my research participants sufficient opportunities to portray their experiences. Cultural accounts and accounts of research are constructed and artificial (Clifford and Marcus, 1986), paying close attention to the epistemological grounds of their representations is one way that researchers can be rigorous, and this is why I began this chapter outlining my epistemology.

In addition, throughout my analysis I have been concerned with the reliability of my interpretations. This has meant exploring alternative interpretations; showing the reader as much as is possible of the procedures that have led to my conclusions; the development of a good quality argument; and the use of thick description. The methods I have used have helped to ensure rigour, for example constant comparative analysis is useful for checking internal validity. This has included discussions of my data with others, which have sometimes led to new interpretations. In the following chapters it is possible to see that my interpretations are supported by theory, which is associated with rigour (Bryman, 2001; Tindall, 1994/1998).

The methods I generated allowed me to explore alternative interpretations of data. The different types of data produced by my research: interview, fieldnotes and photographs, allowed for the production of different accounts; it deepened my understanding of the participant's story (Keats, 2009); and also provided different and complementary ways of presenting the data. Sometimes, a photograph told one story, the mothers' account another, the two together providing a richer and more complete account.



For example, Helen's photograph of her son's nursery showed a quiet and calm room, an impression supported by Helen's accompanying narrative. She described her son's bedtime as a nice time of day, and she talked with nostalgia, for her

cousins' nursery that she saw when she was a child. She told me that she liked looking at "all the teddies and things and cute blankets and stuff".

However, her interview as a whole suggested an alternative version. She told me that the bedtime routine took about an hour, acknowledging that it was a chore and a joy at the same time, because she was tired and still had to cook tea. She also told me that Isaac was a poor sleeper, and she had her own sleep disturbed. The two versions – the photograph representing Helen's fantasy of childhood, and bedtime; and the problems associated with Isaac's sleeping – demonstrated two of Helen's contradictory subject positions about motherhood. The interviews give a much broader, and more complete picture of the women's lives, compared to the photographs. Rather than the photographs simply being useful for elicitation purposes, or analysis; they said other things. The fact that Helen's photo was dissonant with her narrative suggests that the photo has its own place in the narrative.

Ethics

I gained ethics approval from the Open University Ethics committee for each of my research designs, and used the British Sociological Association ethical practice guidelines in designing and carrying out my research. My research raised particular ethical issues, especially when carrying out observations of mothers. For each woman I observed and interviewed, I gained informed and written consent. However, an ethical approach requires constant negotiation, which meant that when gaining agreement for interviews I had to know when to persevere with certain mothers, and when to retreat. Working ethically remained a concern once the data was collected. Some mothers had taken photographs that included their children, which mean that I had to disguise them to ensure anonymity, along with identifying details in the sections of data I quote.

Using photographs in my complete thesis is essential to my thesis and argument. However, using such images in a written text raises additional ethical issues

(Prosser, 2008), as it will be viewed by others. If people are included in the images, then they might be recognised. When I have had to include images with people in them, I have pixelated their faces, so that they can not be recognised. However, the women who took part would be able to recognise their own photos, from the decor and objects in the images, as would any friends and relatives. Although they may never read this thesis, this has meant that I have been particularly careful in ensuring that in my writing, that I had them as an imagined audience in mind, and that whatever I wrote, I would be happy for them to read, not wanting to do violence to them (Bourdieu, 1999).

In an earlier section of this chapter I discussed the degree to which research can intrude into participants' private life at home. Ethics is traditionally concerned with non-exploitation of participants, the effects on the researcher are less frequently considered. Sampson, Bloor, and Fincham (2008) have considered the difficulties experienced by researchers when doing reflexive research, deeming it sufficiently important topic to carry out research on it. They suggest that emotional harm is particularly associated with reflexivity and feminist research methods, and that researchers overlooked their own emotional vulnerabilities.

Trying to research my community through observational methods had such a profound effect on me that I nearly gave up my research, and it had a negative effect on my mental well-being. My final method was less intimate than the first method, meaning that I was better able to maintain boundaries between my own mothering and that of my participants. I felt that through the photo-elicitation methods I was being more open with the women, and that they could choose what to show me in their photographs and talk. This enabled us both: researcher and researched to negotiate personal and intimate meanings in a safe way.

Conclusion

I have found photo voice and photo elicitation to be a productive method, engaging participants and allowing for an easy conversational style interview, and it places some of the research agenda back in the hands of the participants. Furthermore, the method produces different data, to those produced by interviews using a verbal topic guide only. This was found by Steiger (1995), who discovered that with photo elicitation, the photos allowed the researcher to access a deeper level of meaning, compared to interview without photographs. One of my aims was to convey the everyday life of mothers, and I consider that my method enabled me to do that.

My research is characterised by its engagement with intimacy – intimacy with myself, and intimacy with the women I am researching. This search for intimacy caused me problems in carrying out observations, as I found the lack of boundaries associated with intimate methods hard to handle, as well as my own scrutiny of my own mothering through auto/biography. Photo-elicitation enabled me to access intimate areas of women's lives but with a distancing, the women showing me parts of their life that I would otherwise not have seen. Although the women's photographs were banal, they often triggered an emotional story, or a description of intense emotions. I found photos to be a good way of talking about emotions, providing some sort of distance, compared to the method of observation. Moreover, the method enabled the mothers to reflect. As they were telling stories they were making sense of their mothering, and the taking of the images also enabled them to reflect, for example planning what they were going to take photographs of.

In this chapter I have discussed my epistemology that formed the basis of my research design. I have provided an account of how I arrived at my research design, before outlining my research design and described in detail the specific methods that I used. I have addressed the issues of analysis and writing, and

issues of rigorous research and ethics. I argue that my method of a combination of observation, photographs and interview is a new way of looking. I consider that this method is suited to capturing the flavour of a particular mothering culture, it would be a good method to use to access different cultures, and gain an insight into less public practices. This suggests that my research findings are limited, in that I have no comparison group. This could be something to pursue in the future.

In the following chapters I present the mothers' verbal and visual accounts of their everyday activities. I have organised the data into four chapters: materiality, space, time and food. The subject matter of these chapters arose from the analysis I carried out, and are a localised and individualised exploration of those themes, based on the women's photographs and accompanying narratives, as well as my fieldnotes. I begin with material culture, that is, the everyday objects that the women interacted with and which made their everyday life. I continue with space, place and home which looks at the women's place making activities. The following chapter presents the women's talk about time, ranging from talk of years and generations, through to their weeks, days and minutes, before concluding the data chapters with a chapter on food, where I discuss the women's feeding practices with regard to ideals of good mothering, relationships and identity.

In Chapter 2 I outlined the theories that I used for understanding the data generated by my research, and in the previous chapter I described the methods I used to generate my data. In the following four chapters I move to a more detailed look at the data. In each of these chapters I provide a brief overview of relevant literature, before introducing the themes that emerged from the women's photographs, their accompanying talk, and my fieldnotes. In the main body of each chapter I present the data in various ways, sometimes summarising what the women said. I illustrate the themes with examples from particular women, often using their photographs alongside their talk. Sometimes I present a particular

woman as a case study, if she illustrates well the themes that applied to some of the other women. In the conclusion I draw out some of the over arching themes to emerge from my analysis.

Chapter 4: Material culture

Introduction

It is considered that consumption shapes social relations and social meanings and that the world of goods and the way in which they are organised are central to the understanding of contemporary society (Featherstone 1991/1996). The use of objects, and their everyday consuming practices are cultural processes, and meaning is produced by consumers through the use to which they put those objects into practice in their lives. The discipline of the sociology of consumption emerged in the 1980s, focusing on the material culture of societies and how people used objects. Consumption has been researched in different ways, such as through the lens of class, treating objects as symbols, and relating consumption to self-identity (Silva, 2007); the emotional pleasures of consumption (Featherstone, 1991/1996) and the imaginative pleasure-seeking given by a product (Campbell 1995); individuals' emotional relationships with objects (Dant, 2005), and the value of objects as exchange and gift giving (Slater 1997; Komter 2001). Casey and Martens (2007) describe advances in social and cultural approaches to consumption in the past 20 years, which have linked consumption and post modernism; and which have focused on the consuming practices of individuals, rather than just the producers of goods. This has led to a consideration of the ordinary and mundane aspects of consumption.

More recently, through the influence of feminism there has been a focus on domestic consumption (Jackson and Moores, 1995; Casey and Martens, 2007). It is suggested that an understanding of routine and ordinary elements of consumption, such as in the home, is central to an understanding of contemporary consumer culture (Silva, 2007); and Casey and Martens (2007) suggest that a focus on domestic consumption demonstrates that consumption is a social activity, illustrative of the nature of social relations, rather than a sole activity, and a reflection of the self. There has also been a recent focus on motherhood and

consumption (Taylor, Layne and Wozniak, 2004), Clarke (2007) suggesting that "mothering and consumption [are] a mutually constitutive phenomenon" (2007, p 80).

My data in this chapter explore the everyday mundane domestic consuming practices of the women I interviewed in their role as mothers and as women. I consider the interactions between them as individuals, and objects (Pinney 2005, Lury 1996), as a two-way process, the women not simply appropriating objects, but that objects are also instrumental in constructing their world. I consider the meaning that the objects have for their owners; the interaction between mothers and objects; show how mothers express their ideas about mothering through material forms; and how the women experience motherhood, through the objects surrounding them. I also consider embodied practices - the gestures with which objects are used, and the ways in which the mothers interact with objects. This chapter is organised in relation to the categories that emerged from my analysis, and consists of three sections. The first discusses childhood objects such as toys and specialist equipment, and considers notions of taste, and practices of caring. In the second section I consider objects that are important to the mothers, and which they use to construct and maintain their own identities, and to connect with others. Finally, in the third section I consider their embodied practices as they interact with the everyday objects associated with domesticity - cleaning dirty dishes and laundry practices - and how the women's interactions with these objects constitute their everyday lives. Taken together, for the particular group of women I interviewed, these distinct and separate strands comprise the material culture of motherhood.

Childhood objects

A new mother has many new objects to buy, and needs to choose between different brands of equipment. In addition, childhood objects are subject to trends, and can be a symbol of status. Whilst choice of equipment was not an important part of the women's talk or photographs, it was possible to detect feelings of distinction in their attitudes towards their children's toys. In this section I focus on the mothers' interactions with childhood objects such as toys and equipment, and their feelings about them. I consider how toys were numerous, large and very visible, before moving on to the relative invisibility of equipment associated with children. I then consider how mothers photographed, and talked about objects, as expressions of their love and care for their children, carrying out the role of a 'good mother'.

Toys on view

Looking at all the photographs after I had interviewed the mothers, I was initially struck by the size and colour of the toys, and the high visibility of the toys. There were many similar-looking images – piles of brightly coloured plastic, of different shapes, spilling out over the floor from various storage objects, making a mess.

Two women had taken photographs of large toys in their gardens, which included bouncy castles. Consumption is subject to constant change and trends (Appadurai, 1990 and Slater, 1997), and it seemed that the prevalence of large toys was a recent phenomenon - when my children were younger, it was less common to own such large toys. In Carol's¹ photographs, her children's collection of big toys appeared to take over her garden:

1 Carol, aged 37, living with partner, four children aged 13 months to 17 years.



In some homes, some toys were too big to put away every evening. Natasha² left Alfie's large plastic jigsaw pieces permanently out in the dining room:



Unless she closed the folding doors which separated the living and dining rooms, this was a colourful and permanent reminder of childhood, and of the role of mother. Julia³ and her daughter regularly tidied away her toys, yet they were stored in an open area in the living room, where they were permanently on view:

² Natasha aged 31 living with partner, one son aged 11 months

³ Julia aged 26 married with one daughter aged 2 years



In many of the images, the toys appeared to take over the available space, simultaneously filling the photograph frame, and the space in the house:



Helen⁴



Melissa⁵

This idea of the taking over of space was echoed in the mothers' narratives, most women repeating, almost ritualistically, the idea that their children had 'too many

4 Helen aged 29, living with partner, one son aged 18 months
 5 Melissa aged 26, single parent, one daughter aged 15 months

toys'. Judith⁶ said that her five children had "masses and masses of toys", and that there were toys everywhere, all over the house:

"Normally you're ankle deep in toys, complete chaos, everywhere, and it's everywhere".

The toys were very visible to her, as they involved a lot of work – tidying them up, and sorting them out. She related that most of them were gifts, and that she wished that people didn't give them, because her children had too many, that they didn't need them and that it was "a waste". She talked about the sorts of toys her children were given, saying that she would prefer books instead:

"people love giving you those big toys, you know the big moulded plastic things, you know the toy kitchen that takes up the entire room and those sort of things [...] and the toys that look not so big when they're in *toys R us*, and then you get them into your front room, and you think well actually that's just huge".

Lisa Baraitser (2008) considers that choosing toys has a moral dimension, which involves sorting through hundreds of objects

"to ascertain the moral quality of the object, trying to separate the 'good' from the 'bad'" (p 145).

This can mean decisions such as choosing between wood and plastic, handmade or mass produced, educational or not. In a similar way, Judith is making a moral distinction between large plastic toys, and books. By stating her preference for her children to have books, Judith was positioning herself as a mother who was concerned with the education of her children, and was also displaying her taste. Thus toys provided the women in my study with the opportunity to display their values about mothering.

6 Judith aged 35, married, five children aged 12 weeks to 6 years.

Like Judith, Helen also discussed plastic toys that were received as gifts:

"That is one of the things we joke, we're always like 'oh another load of plastic' at Christmas or his birthday, it's like 'oh no, more plastic'."

Helen spoke in a derogatory way about the plastic toys, and her photograph on a previous page shows colourful plastic toys jarring against varnished floorboards and a wicker storage basket. McCracken (1988/1990) considered that goods go together because culture gives them the same symbolic properties, and they have internal cultural consistency. This could explain why the large colourful toys were so noticeable, as their bright colours jarred against the tasteful wooden floors.

Goods such as toys can be markers of social status, and there are moral distinctions between types of toys, such as plastic, or wood, as Judith and Helen show. Stating that taste classifies the classifier, Bourdieu (1984/1987) considered that people distinguished themselves from each other by adopting a certain lifestyle in which certain things or goods functioned as markers of their (aspired) status. Through their consumption practices, an individual exercises and displays their taste or style. In their talk to me about toys, Judith and Helen were revealing their cultural values, and engaging in a practice of social positioning.

However, the women I interviewed did not only consider the moral dimensions of toys, nor whether the toys fitted their tastes. They also considered the pleasure that the toys would bring their children.

Consumption and caring

Pugh (2002) suggests that child-rearing consumption concerns establishing and making connections between caregiver and child, and that consumption is “done in the name of care” (p 2). Caring through the act of consuming was a practice engaged in by Gabby⁷, a mother of four children, three of whom were triplets. Gabby made sure that she bought clothes for the triplets in their favourite colours, which helped the children to know their own clothes when they were getting dressed. This principle was also applied to their lunch boxes, which had been chosen because they were themed with the triplets’ favourite characters:



Gabby described this image to me:

“Daniel is *Bob the Builder* and *Thomas [the tank engine]*, Amy’s anything pink and sparkly and Aaron usually is *Tellytubbies*. But because *Tellytubbies* is more baby you just can’t get it and you know. So (pointing to the photograph) I think that’s *ninja turtle* or something but we sold it on the fact that it’s green you see. So you have to have a way to sell it to them (Laughs)”.

Not only did Gabby take care that to buy the right colour for each child, knowing that this was important to them and her, she was also carrying out mediated consumption - as a consumer of goods, she then had to sell those objects to her children.

⁷ Gabby aged 34, married, four children aged 3 and 7 years.

Expressions of love and care extended to the women's interactions with the toys, which were also expressive of their relationships with their children. Some women explained how they took care of their children's toys, sorting them out in the evening, ensuring all the "bits" were together. They gave importance to the toys, considering the pleasure that their children experienced in playing with them. Their accounts suggested that they were as involved with the toys as much as their children, on a daily basis, suggesting a close involvement with their children's lives.



Melissa showed me a photograph of her daughter's toys in a bath, and described how every time she had a shower, her daughter Billie wanted one with her. She related how Billie played, as Melissa showered:

"I will put the plug in, in the bath and she will sit quite happily as the water fills up around her but then she'll get my shampoo bottle, tip it upside down to make bubbles, [...] um that [toy] just spins down when you press the handle down if you put some neat bubble bath in there it just froths up [...] that um squeezey ball I used to have in my bath at mum's house, so, again that's probably one of her favourite toys ... and that's a wind up crocodile, but the minute you wind it up and put it on the water it stops, it's meant to kick its legs but for some reason the water stops it moving".

Melissa showed her care by describing in detail how her daughter played with her favourite toys. The intimate knowledge she displayed in describing Billie's playing, revealed their closeness, and that this scenario was played out every day. However, Melissa was ambivalent about Billie sharing her shower with her – she would have

liked to have had a few minutes on her own. In addition, she appeared to be encumbered by Billie and her toys, and the decorative shells she used to have in her bathroom had been replaced by toys. The bathroom was no longer an adult space, but a child's space, and like the large toys I described earlier, the toys were constantly visible.

Performing 'good mothering' through craft activities

Not only did the toys represent the women's care of their children, and their close relationships, toys also represented practices of 'good mothering'. The notion of 'good parenting' and consumption has been linked by various authors, including Evans and Chandler (2006) who in their study found that

"parents regarded providing their children with the commodities and symbols of contemporary popular culture as indicative of 'good' parenting" (para 8.1).

Some women had taken photographs of other childhood objects, such as books, and painting. Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) found that middle class mothers often used play as an educational activity. Although some of the women in my study talked about enjoying carrying out craft activities with their children, sometimes, in the mothers' narratives and photographs these activities were grouped with more formal activities, such as reading, or learning the alphabet. Out of the 11 photographs taken by Kath⁸, three related to educating her children, and carrying out craft activities. For Kath, these images belonged together, as she presented them one after another.



8 Kath, aged 33, married, two sons aged 4 months and 2 ¾ years.

She told me that she took the first photograph of alphabet jigsaw and number cards, because she considered teaching as part of her role as mother. She related how she made education part of everyday activities, such as counting when walking up the stairs, and recognising numbers on car number plates.

Mothers sometimes talked about trying to read with their children, but it seemed that their children were too young to take an interest. Another mother, Natasha, showed me photograph of herself reading to her 11 month-old son, yet she acknowledged that he was not interested in sitting down and listening to a story.



Within their discourses of mothers who cared, and who enjoyed closeness with their children, by beginning to educate their children with books, numbers and the alphabet, Natasha and Kath were also performing the role of a 'good mother', and being a 'good mother' was an active demonstration of their love for their children.

Objects that help and hinder

As I sorted through the women's photographs I had found many that featured toys, and far fewer that had equipment as their main focus. Although equipment such as stairgates, highchairs and dummies was visible in the photographs, it was not generally discussed, but mentioned as an aside. This may be because once in the home, the equipment literally became part of the furniture. Pushchairs featured in some photographs, but were often incidental to the main story the mother wished to tell. They were instrumental to other activities – fetching brothers and sisters from school, or going for a walk.

For Lisa Baraitser (2008), motherhood represents a major shift in how the body is experienced, because of the activities that are carried out. Making feeding bottles, playing with Lego, and collapsing pushchairs, means that mothers have to acquire a new set of skills and actions, or relearn old ones. She suggests that women's interactions with new objects associated with the child, as well as the child itself, means that motherhood has viscosity, a mother interacting with things that are too small or big, or too many.

Carol was the only woman who talked about her pushchair in detail.



She told me that she used it every day, and first of all described it as a godsend, because her twins used it every day, taking their day time nap in it. However, she was less happy about using it:

"everywhere I go you have to take the pushchair so you're forever folding down the pushchair, putting it in the car, taking the pushchair out. Whatever you do you've got to take the pushchair and you've got to lug it about with you".

Baraitser points out that a pushchair acts in different ways, to aid and fail to aid the mother in her work caring for the child, meaning that a mother might be encumbered by a pushchair. Having a double pushchair, and twins, Carol was more aware of the cumbersome nature of using a pushchair. She also talked about the difficulty of using car seats:

"I found that when they were babies you've got two car seats, one into the car and you've got two into the car and do one up and then you've got to get another one and you think by the time I've thought about it I might as well just stay here [...] I think it could bog you down if you let it."

Encumbered by objects such as pushchairs, the mother encounters space differently to non-mothers (Baraitser, 2008). An intermediary between the mother and the world, the objects alter the perception of the world and the environment, because everything is experienced through this object. As Carol talked I felt the weight and size of her pushchair, I visualised the constant collapsing and reconstructing, and the fiddling with knobs and levers. Her narrative showed how her interaction with an object, the pushchair, constituted her daily experience of motherhood, a constant feature of her life as a mother.

In this section I have considered the women's interactions with childhood objects; and how through their consuming practices the women were simultaneously displaying taste and care for their children, as well as performing 'good mothering'. This section has focused on the women's everyday consuming practices as mothers. The next section considers their interactions with objects that are expressive of their own identities.

Mothers' own objects

As well as carrying out activities to be a 'good mother', the women I interviewed had sometimes taken photographs of objects that were important to them. These objects had symbolic value, signifying something more than the object itself. They represented the women making time for themselves, and taking care of themselves – the creation and maintenance of an identity as woman, separate from the role as mother.

Caring for themselves

Some mothers had taken photographs of objects they used in their personal grooming. Grooming can be considered one of the technologies or practices of the self, what Foucault (1988) calls the methods and techniques through which human beings constitute themselves. Appearance and bodily presentation are considered to be expressions of the self, Featherstone (1991) considering that recently, greater emphasis has been placed on appearance, display and the management of impressions, leading to a new concept of the self.

"Doing her hair" was important to Gabby, and she had taken a photo of her hair straighteners.



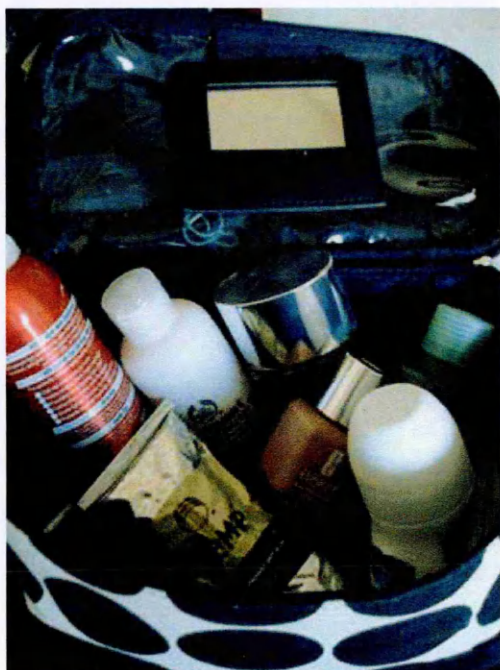
She related that when her triplets were babies she might not have had a chance to "do her hair" until 4 o'clock in the afternoon. She described how if her hair was not right that she felt "almost frustrated", that it was such a "silly thing" but that it did "grate at her, the fact you know that I've not had time to sort me".

Gabby described finding the time to do her hair as an "emotional thing", and that she would get "stressed out", and "break down" if she couldn't do it. She related that she was upset if she had so little time to attend to herself, but that when she did straighten her hair

"I just saw myself different if I did do that, I was a better person in the day than if I hadn't". She said that "something's quite simple as that [straightening her hair], does me wonders, it really does".

Gabby suggested that finding the time to attend to her appearance made her feel better about herself. Another mother, Helen discussed how she had had to change her routine since her son was born. She used to dry her hair, and make it straight, but now she had to leave it wet,

"and just scrunch it with some mousse, to make it a bit curly", she hadn't "got the time to faff about anymore with the hair dryer".



Showing me a photograph of her make-up in a bag, she said that she used to keep it loose, but now had to keep it in a bag and out of her son's way, because "otherwise he just tries to get everything and bite the tops off everything and it's just dangerous".

She described putting on make-up as "a bit of a pain". She told me: "I hate having to put make up on because I kind of think why am I bothering and then I

think ...I don't know, I just couldn't leave the house if I didn't have eyeliner on.

And I think well that's stupid, who's looking".

Part of Helen's story concerned her son encroaching on her possessions, and not being able to leave anything within his reach. Her make-up could be seen to symbolise her identity as a woman, separate from her identity as a mother. Gabby and Helen's narratives simultaneously show the difficulty of finding time to attend to their appearance; and how important grooming was to their sense of self. Their grooming practices signified their attempts to maintain their identity as woman, as separate from that of mother, and illustrate how on becoming a mother, the unitary self of woman yields to the more fluid self of the mother (Baraitser, 2006). The symbolism of these objects to Gabby and Helen demonstrate how objects can be an important part of identity construction. Other mothers had taken photographs of objects displayed in their home, and used them to talk about their identities.

Displaying identities

Hurdley (2006) has considered how display objects and domestic artefacts can manifest 'private' experiences of the self, and biographies of 'things' are important in the construction of individual and family autobiographies, as individuals appropriate objects. There were two mothers who took pictures of photographs on their walls. Adele (aged 32) was a single mother of Tansy, who was 22 months old.



She had taken a photograph of her living room wall, upon which were displayed two photographs, and an award from an employer – all dating from the time before she became a mother. The photographs were stylistically different. One was Adele's graduation photograph; the other was a professional portrait of Adele looking beautiful and slim, lying down on a bed, wearing a sexy outfit, with a misty effect added to its

appearance. These objects displayed identities that differed from Adele's current identity. She described herself to me as a single mother on benefits, with mental health problems, trying to lose weight. Adele used the photograph of these objects to explain how she felt about her identity, and her attempts to maintain her particular identity as a single mother with little money.

In her study, Hurdley (2006) found that her interviewees used their narratives to show that they had other identities and values, using objects to build absent presences. In the same way, Adele used this photograph to talk about the difference between her and other mothers, and talked about her work to position herself as a professional woman with a degree. She explained that in taking this photograph she was trying to show the contrast between her life as it had been, and as it was now; and that she was also trying to show the contrast between herself and other mothers who were on benefits with mental health problems, yet who did not have a professional background, unlike Adele.

Adele's previous work identity was important to her, and she returned to the topic of work at various times during the interview. She described how her work was her

commitment to society and that she had always worked in jobs where she was trying to make the world a better place. She related how she would have liked to have returned to work, to avoid people looking down on her because she was a single mother on benefit, but was unable to once her daughter's severe milk allergy had been discovered. She talked about the shield, also visible in the photograph, which was a "thank you" from a previous employer for the work she had done. She said that it was a very different life, but that it was still part of her:

"that's the part of me that people used to see, it's not a part of me that people see now, if you see what I mean, but it still is part of me".

Adele was coming to terms with her changing identity as a mother, which involved a loss of professional identity and income. Motherhood is seen by many to be a time of identity change (Smith 1999). Becoming a single mother, leaving work to be on benefits, and gaining weight, all seemed to represent a distinct rupture for Adele, although she considered that her 'earlier selves', displayed on the wall, were still part of her. The objects on Adele's wall represented her past and how she had changed since becoming a mother. Another mother, Tamsin, had also taken photographs of objects on her walls. She too talked of the past, but some of her objects also represented the present, and the future. Both described themselves as single mothers, and both had moved to a housing association property on becoming a mother.

Tamsin was 19, and described herself as a single mother of Jacob, aged one, although her boyfriend lived with her. Many of the photographs she had taken were of objects in her home, suggesting that these objects carried a lot of meaning for her. Whilst pregnant, she had become homeless, as her mother had "thrown her out", and she and her boyfriend had lived with her boyfriend's family, in a small flat, before eventually being given a housing association house. Tamsin had left all

her “stuff” at her mother’s house, including her books (“hundreds of books”) and her widescreen TV. She told me:

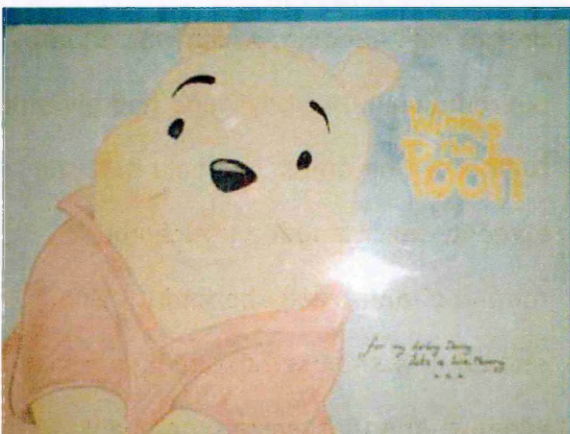
“I had to start getting all my own stuff again. Everything in this house is what I’ve done since I was pregnant.”

We discussed two of the images she had taken of photographs on her living room wall.



Referring to the image on the right, she said: “That’s me when I was pregnant because I was really, really proud of my bump, it was huge”. Pointing to the photograph on the left, she said:

“That’s me and my boyfriend when we went to Skeggy [Skegness]. I was 17 weeks pregnant there, not that I had a bump or anything, but I was just really, really happy. Just on holiday. Went with Joe’s [her boyfriend] grandparents, went on the big wheel ...”



Tamsin also described herself as creative. She had made a drawing of Winnie the Pooh, which hung on her son’s bedroom wall.

She also showed me a completed Winnie the Pooh jigsaw, which she was planning to frame and hang in her son's room. She told me that she and her boyfriend had made it when Jacob was in bed. She related

"We like doing stuff like that, that we've drawn and made instead of just buying things to hang up",

and she said that when he was older that she would tell him that she and his father made it together. Alison Clarke (2001) discusses how a family's decorating and 'improvements' represent "an envisaged aim of family and a new sociality" (p 39). The objects Tamsin created, and surrounded herself with were symbolic of her new life with her new family, and her new identity as mother.

Much has been written about the role of objects in identity work (Csikszentmihalyi, 2001; Warde 2001; Campbell 1995). Possessions are viewed as aspects of the self in modern Euro-American societies (Lury 1996), individuals defining themselves through what they possess. This relates to the idea of self-creation through consumption, not merely purchase, but how goods are used in the home, and then displaying these identities. Objects are not only chosen to express self-identity, but also as part of the identity that the individual wishes to project (Campbell 1995).



Tamsin had also taken a photograph of a bronze wall hanging, which was on her bedroom wall. Her boyfriend had given it to her for Christmas, she said that she loved it, describing it as "nice and romantic" and "really beautiful". She related how she used to see it in a shop window, and that every time she walked past she said that she wanted it.

This object was important to Tamsin on many levels. The figure had an aura of exclusivity, costing £100, which was a large amount of money for her. In addition, she described herself as artistic, meaning that she was displaying her aesthetic tastes with this object. As the figure was a gift from her boyfriend, and something that she had coveted for a while, it was a visual representation of the relationship between her and her boyfriend, symbolising romance to her, and one which she saw every day, in their bedroom. The object was a symbol of the relationship between Tamsin and her boyfriend. Some women in my study talked about objects that represented other relationships.

Connecting and remembering

When I interviewed Donna⁹, she showed me a dado rail in the hall, behind which were stored commemorative objects, such as tickets to a musical, and a football match. This display of objects were reminders of important times in the family's life, and they helped Donna to remember and commemorate the past.

Part of Donna's narrative included a description of a trip to London with her ten year old daughter to see a musical, and during that weekend her husband and son had travelled to London to spend time with them. Included in the photographs she had taken for me, were images of famous sights around London, that she had taken during that weekend. This was a family activity which was an important memory for Donna, and an important part of her story about being a mother, because her job as a teaching assistant helped to pay for such trips as these.

Also behind the dado rail were her son's tickets from an important football match, which was when the local team was playing another team to get into a higher football division. This event too, was an important part of Donna's story about

9 Donna aged 43, married, two children aged 14 and 10 years

being a mother. She had sacrificed a birthday outing to support her son, who was queuing up for tickets overnight.

"Gareth getting those tickets meant more to me than me going out for the day. ... Because it was so important to him and he loves [football team]....But I didn't mind him spoiling my birthday and not being able to do what I wanted because Gareth getting those tickets and doing that was more important. Because sometimes it is isn't it?".

Donna's objects were used to represent the family identity. Keeping the objects, and displaying them was important to her role as mother. Melissa too talked about commemorative objects. Her mother had died a few weeks before Melissa gave birth, and she seemed to consider herself as the keeper of her own childhood memories – something that normally her mother might do. In her interview, Melissa often talked about memories, and creating memories. She described objects she had made as a child, and which she had kept, saying that they were nice to look back on. She described the imprint of a shell she had made on a school camp, and she was keeping it to show to her daughter – that it would be a memory.

"memories mean a lot because that's all I've got, it's nice to make some for future people like Billie".

Carol Smart (2007) has written about emotional bonds that are created in family narratives, that webs of tradition and connection become a kind of security blanket. Melissa was unable to connect with her dead family members, but was instead connecting with her younger self as a child, and was working on creating new memories for her daughter to enjoy when she was older.

In this section I have considered how the women in my study used objects to represent care for themselves, at times trying to connect with their pre-maternal selves, and retain pre-birth aspirations. I considered how objects symbolised their identities as women, and also as mothers; and how they used objects to represent

and commemorate relationships. I now move from the symbolic function of objects, to a consideration of how the women in my study used objects in their everyday lives as mothers.

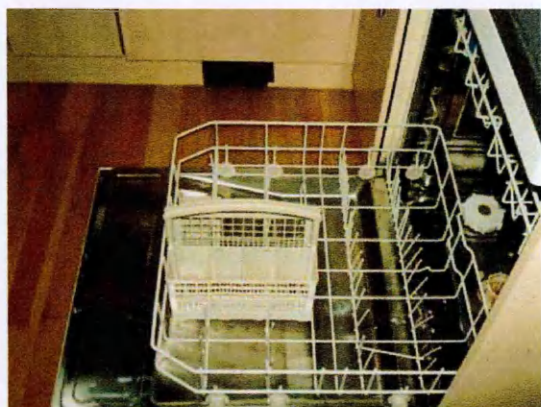
Domestic material culture

In previous sections I have considered the symbolism of objects such as equipment, toys, and the women's own objects. However, objects not only had symbolic value, they also had a material impact on the women's everyday lives. In a domestic setting, material objects include dealing with the dishes, and the laundry. As a house is a lived-in space, so domestic material objects are always present such as piles of ironing. As I sat down to interview Julia, she moved a pile of ironing off the kitchen table, saying it was half done. When I arrived to interview Penny¹⁰, she spent the first few minutes taking the washing out of the washing machine; and Donna's interview was punctuated by the sounds of a washing machine. These sights and sounds of household activities were a feature of my interviews, and their ever-present nature was also a feature of the women's domestic lives.

Unnarrated: Ignored and unloved

Domestic, routine activities take up a certain amount of time, every day. Dirty pots and dishes have to be dealt with. As clothes are worn and then discarded, they need washing, along with sheets and towels. Once washed, they require drying, and then perhaps ironing. I specifically asked the women to photograph domestic, routine activities, and they did – there were photographs that represented laundry practices, and the cleaning of dirty dishes. However, compared to laundry practices, which I discuss later, fewer women mentioned dealing with dirty dishes. Faced with a photograph of a dishwasher, they would often have very little to say.

10 Penny aged 41, married, with two children aged 6 years and 22 months.



This was also true for those who did not have dishwashers. Anne¹¹ said that she would often wash up three times a day, she made no comment about whether she liked it or not. It was something that needed carrying out, and did not seem to merit deeper reflection. Two mothers talked about how these chores seemed constant and always there, yet said it briefly, the amount of time given to it in the interview not relating to the actual amount of time devoted to it in real life.

“housework, always something I’m always doing, sort of these two both, that, sort of forever washing clothes and forever washing pots up” (Chris¹²).

The lack of narrative around cleaning dirty dishes might be because such activities were repetitious and required little thought. When objects are used, daily, for months, they become part and parcel of our subjectivity, and are often used in an unthinking way. This is one of the difficulties associated with studying the everyday (Gardiner, 2000). In addition, as women in conversation, we were talking about activities that we both engaged in our homes. We both understood the embodied activities associated with these activities, and they did not seem to require further explanation.

11 Anne, aged 38, married, three children aged 2, 4 and 6

12 Chris aged 35, married with two children aged 1 ½ and 3 ½.

At other times, everyday domestic activities were glossed over for different reasons. These were activities that these mothers did not enjoy, and did not want to dwell on them, either by not taking a photograph of them, or not wanting to talk about them in the interview. This suggests it was not an image of motherhood that they wished to present to me, or that this particular identity of motherhood was one with which they wished to identify. Helen did not want to spend time talking about the chores in the interview. With the photograph of her washing machine in front of her, she summarised her laundry activities in three short sentences:



"And then the washing machine.

There's always washing isn't there, when you've got a baby there's just oodles of laundry to do. So that represents washing, drying and all that rigmarole, boring stuff."

Helen was fervent in her dislike of washing the dishes. She showed me a photograph of "the pots":



"This [photograph] is obviously washing up and it's something I hate. I hate it. I have to get up and there's always pots to wash and I just think oh I hate doing this part of the day. Every morning. And then I think at night, perhaps if I wash them before I go to bed. But I'm always just too tired before I go to bed. So every morning I think oh it's the pots, I've got to sort all the washing out".

Lisa¹³ too left her pots for the next day, because she said she was too tired in the evening. Like Helen, she too used the word "hate", saying that she hated "the pots", and that cleaning them was always left up to her.

In the interviews, Helen and Lisa were dissociating this practice from their own identities. They related that they preferred to be doing something else more interesting - Lisa would go out for a walk every morning rather than do her pots; Helen preferred to play with her son. They differed from Anne and Chris, who took a more pragmatic attitude, seeing it as a necessary part of their role in looking after the house, yet not particularly worthy of discussion. The women in my study were more prepared to talk about their laundry practices, however, and I consider these next.

Preferences and standards: laundry

Sarah Pink (2007) considers the role that laundry practices play in the creation of individual's homes and self-identities. For her, consumption practices such as carrying out laundry, are bound up with sensory perception, and the moral values attached to them.



Julia described how she looked out at her washing with pleasure in the garden, saying:

"I love getting my washing out on the line, there's nothing quite like line dried washing".

In addition, she recounted how her daughter Mia used the washing as a toy, running in and out of it.

¹³ Lisa, aged 27, married, with one son aged one year

Another mother, Kath told me that she liked her washing blowing on the line:

"I think it's a nice feeling. I don't know what it is about it, having it out on the line and drying it".



Unlike Sarah Pink who researched individuals' sensory preferences, I did not explore why these two women liked seeing their washing on the line. Perhaps washing on a line was evidence of a good mother, who had taken the time to hang out the washing in fresh air - the visible sight of a job well done.

For Kay¹⁴, the feeling of the washing, rather than the sight, was important. Unlike Julia and Kath, she used a tumble drier to dry her washing, not only because it was more convenient, but because line dried washing produced unwanted tactile results – she considered that line dried clothes felt harder.

The differences between Kath, Julia and Kay were representative of the many different ways in which the women chose to carry out their laundry practices. Whilst nearly all the women stated that they were responsible for the laundry and ironing (if they chose to iron), they all achieved this in different ways, and this was striking when viewing the photographs. These differences were articulated in their narratives. Some said that they separated coloureds and whites, and washed them separately, others did not but washed all their laundry together. Some said that they washed laundry every day, others two or three times a week. Some washed overnight, either to use the electricity economy rate or to have clothes ready to hang out on the line in the morning. However, with all the women, the expectation of clean clothes, and the washing of them, was unspoken.

¹⁴ Kay, aged 27, married with two daughters aged 2 and 3 ½

The differences between the women's practices were particularly apparent in the photographs that represented drying laundry. The following photographs show washing being dried in the house on radiators, and outside - in a lean-to, on a rotary clothes drier, and a traditional washing line. Some mothers referred to using to a tumble drier, but this was not represented in their photographs.



In their narratives, these differences were accounted for by their emphasis on personal preference, not merely sensory. Some were constrained by available space and economic resources – some women had no space for a dishwasher, or a tumble drier. Often, these preferences were related to making their lives easier, for example, using a tumble drier was described as easier and quicker, rather than hanging it outside. However, others preferred drying the washing outside on the line, because it saved using electricity.

During the interviews, differences in the mothers' own personal standards were revealed, in particular with regard to ironing. Some women ironed all the clothes of every member of the household. Others chose what to iron, and what not to iron. Some would iron as and when required, on a daily basis, or do it all in one go, and they might have a special day for this. Others would wait until they had nothing left to wear. Some even had techniques of how they ironed, eg ironing the children's clothes because that meant the pile went down quicker. Some differentiated themselves from other mothers, with regard to ironing - one mother talked about 'some' people who ironed all in one session, on a Sunday, whereas she and her husband ironed as required. Some of the women's partners were responsible for ironing their own clothes.

Judgements can often be made about the performance of domestic activities, such as ironing. Shove considers that

"as laundry is routinely positioned as women's work and since the results are constantly on show, judgements about clothing and appearance are at the same time judgements about standards of domestic performance" (2003, p 119).

When talking about ironing, the women mainly talked about ironing their children's clothes, and it seemed that ironing their children's clothes is what 'good' mothers

do. Angela¹⁵ chose to iron her two daughter's clothes, contrary to advice from friends, and despite it "driving her mad". She said that she liked to do it as a mother, and that it was nice to "iron little clothes". The time she spent ironing could be seen to represent the care she wants to give to her daughters, as well as carrying out the role of a 'good' mother. Judith, a mother of five children, said that due to lack of time she did not iron clothes, and that her elder daughter went to school "crumpled", and in her narrative she referred to ideas that a 'good' mother dresses her children in clean and ironed clothes, an ideal which she could not fulfil. Judith was aware that she might be judged for sending her children to school "crumpled", but felt that she lacked the time to iron their clothes.

The women invested their laundry practices with their own identities, carrying out these activities according to their own preferences and moral standards. They were all choosing to carrying out practices which meant that they felt they were conforming to the dominant normative discourse of a 'good mother', yet achieved this in different ways. Early feminist work considered that the home, and being responsible for chores, was a source of female oppression. However, more recent work (Pink, 2007) has considered women's agency in their domestic practices. In her study of sensory practices of the home, Pink (2007) argued that through laundry expertise and practice women are empowered in the home. The women I interviewed organised their laundry practices in such a way that they considered was best for the family, for them, and for their child, and according to the available space, and their lifestyle. Their differing approaches demonstrate that they were not simply conforming to existing norms, but were undergoing a creative process by which they rejected, accepted or stretched norms and conventions (Pink, 2007).

15 Angela, aged 40, married with two daughters aged 5 and 16 months

In this section I have shown how dealing with unloved domestic objects such as laundry and the washing up constituted the women's daily experiences, yet the performance of these privatised activities allowed for some processes of individualisation and differentiation. I also showed how attitudes varied according to the activities – women had more to discuss about laundry practices than they did about how they dealt with dirty dishes.

Conclusion

Three distinct categories of material culture have emerged from my data: childhood, women's own objects and the domestic. These three areas represent aspects of the maternal role - care of the child, care of the self and the maintenance of home and family; and I have shown that being a mother involves a balancing of these three areas. At times the women were trying to be at one with the child; and at other times separate from the child, drawing on past identities, which they were trying to maintain in the present. They were also trying to maintain the family, and all of these were inter-related, linking dynamically in women's lives.

Managing these different roles meant that sometimes emotions emerged, such as frustration in not having time to groom themselves, their children having too many toys, or the awkwardness of a pushchair. However, there were also glimpses of pleasure – for example Tamsin's bronze wall hanging; the vicarious pleasure experienced through their children's toys; and taking sensory pleasure in the laundry.

Through their use of domestic and childhood material culture, processes of differentiation were made possible. Processes of distinction were occurring through choice of toys; objects were used to display, and talk about their identities; and

through differing domestic practices such as laundry, sensory preferences were expressed.

Consumption of domestic objects, such as washing up, and the laundry, concerned maintaining home, and by extension, family. However, at times there was a need for 'me time', represented by the grooming activities carried out by Helen and Gabby, for example. This meant that times the women were engaging in boundary creation, carving out me time, whereas the use of domestic objects concerned the family as a collective. The mess associated with the images of toys spilling over the floor, and the taking over of space, suggest a need for physical boundary-making too, which I address in the next chapter.

In this chapter the photographs played a vital role in helping me to interpret the women's data about material culture. They helped me to identify unnarrated practices; and revealed the differences in the women's laundry practices. They captured practices that visitors might not always see, such as the toys spilling out on the floor, or dominating the garden. The repetition of brightly coloured plastic objects became apparent in sorting through the photographs, and enabled me to identify an emerging theme of 'childhood aesthetics', as I noticed similarities between the material objects, and how children's space was decorated, as I show in the following chapter.

Having considered domestic material culture, and the everyday activities the objects engendered, I now broaden my focus, to consider the embodied activities associated with domestic space, and the meanings that space had for the mothers in my study.

Chapter 5: Space, place and home

Introduction

In the previous chapter I concluded that through their use of objects women were performing 'good mothering', and used objects to connect with their children. In their consumption of domestic objects women were maintaining family and home, although at times they engaged in 'me time' practices. I suggested that there were three aspects to the maternal role – care of the child, the domestic practices keeping the family and home together, and practices to maintain their own identities; having to balance these three needs; and the emotions associated with trying to balance all of these things. I showed how through their decorative practices, some women invested domestic space with their own identities. I also showed how objects of domestic material culture such as toys, and laundry, encroached on space. I build on these themes in this chapter in considering space, place and home, in the lives of the women I interviewed.

In this chapter I draw on geographical meanings of 'space' and 'place', where space is considered to be the physical demarcation of an area, and place is space that has meaning invested in it. People engage in place making activities, and make spaces meaningful (Cresswell, 2004), which means that 'place' and individuals have a relationship with each other. Individuals feel an attachment to a spirit of place, and people will define themselves through a sense of place, and this is what makes places individual and unique (Crang, 1998). In addition, place is made and remade on a daily basis (Cresswell, 2004 and Massey, 1999), by the activities that take place in it, including relationships with others.

'Home' is particularly associated with identity. People invest the house with their identity, the home both reflecting and projecting their identity. Iris Marion Young writes that:

"home is where a person can be "herself"; one is "at home" when she feels that she is with others who understand her in her particularity" (2006, p 138).

How space is experienced will depend on the activities performed by the women, and the meanings given to those activities. In this chapter I consider the different meanings of space, place and home arising from my data, and the role of everyday activities in producing meanings and experiences of space. My focus is not purely on the home, but other places associated with maternal activities. Framed by the mothers, the subject matter of this chapter is very wide, extending from talk about village life and community, to domestic housework. I focus on how space is experienced by the women I interviewed, how it felt to live and carry out activities in their space, indoors and outdoors. Space is experienced through the senses, and through the emotions. This is the phenomenological experiencing of their space, which I and the reader can imagine as we look at the photographs.

The chapter is divided into two parts, and is organised in relation to the categories that emerged from my analysis. In the first section I discuss ideals of family and place, using examples of belonging to a community; improving the home; creating children's bedrooms; enjoying the garden, and escape. In the second section, inspired by photographs taken by the mothers to represent space, I consider the aesthetics of space within the home, looking at how mothers create beauty, through decoration, reordering and cleaning, and how these practices are an expression of their emotions.

A suitable place to bring up a family – ideals of home

In contemporary UK society, an ideal home is considered to be a suburban one (Blunt and Dowling, 2006), and I would add, with a garden, too. Most of the women I interviewed lived in suburban homes. In this section I consider how mothers associated where they live, with ideas of family. This encompasses the geographical area; the structure of the home; how it is decorated; and its outdoor space – the garden.

A sense of community

Two of the women talked about the area where they lived, as it was the setting of some of the activities they carried out as mothers. Angela related how the idea of community was important to her as a mother. She attended a local toddler group, which she considered to be a life line, reducing her feelings of isolation. She described how one time in particular she had been made to feel welcome. She said that her five month old baby had been crying all morning, and “driven me mad”. At the toddler group, she said to the other women:

““it was either come here or kill a child”. And they [the other women] took her off me, they fed her and played with her and nobody said anything, nobody made a big deal out of it”. [...] And I think that says a lot about the people that go really.”

A sense of community can be defined as networks of interpersonal ties that provide sociability, support, information, a sense of belonging and social identity (Wellman 2001). Community, writes Rose:

“is meant to be warm and caring, secure and relational, and communication between women [...] is central to this particular cultural representation of place” (1993, p 57).

Angela’s experiences played out this notion of community. In addition to attending a local toddler group, she explained that she had started attending her local church

since her daughters were born (aged 16 months and 5 months). She had wanted her daughters to grow up appreciating the community around them, and felt that the church community could provide that, because there were people there who "cared about things". She considered that community could not be found any more in the streets, unlike when she was growing up. This suggests that Angela wanted her daughters to experience the same sense of community she had done, as a child and teenager. Angela was gaining a real self of belonging, sociability and support from her activities in the community attending church and the local toddler group, and building relationships – all of which created her sense of community.

It could be said that Angela's notion of community was romantic, as it was partly based on nostalgia for her own childhood. Anne, another mother, also had a romantic view of place – in this case a village, which she and her husband considered to be a good place to bring up a family. She related that they had moved because she had wanted to live somewhere where she could walk to school, and not use the car. Describing nations, Anderson (1983) introduced the idea of an 'imagined community', where members of the imagined community hold in their minds a mental image of their affinity, and imagine themselves as part of that group. To Anne and her husband, the village was an 'imagined community', because they were attributing ideals to it, that may or may not have existed.

However, Anne described how her life as a mother in a village was not initially how she envisaged it. She said that found it hard at first to be accepted in the community, to the point that she had been thinking that she wanted to move. However, as the children attended pre-school, school and toddler groups in the village, she told me she had managed to build up a network of friends.

Simonsen and Vaiou (1996) suggest that it is through daily routines, such as taking children to school that place is continuously structured. Anne told me that she

enjoyed her walk to school, saying that she walked in “all weathers, snow, everything”, and she related how she enjoyed the social aspect of the playground:

“you go down [to school] in the morning, and say hello to people, talk to them, some will say do you want to come back home for a coffee, or do you want to go shopping today”.

Through her activities of walking to school, and talking to other mothers in the playground, for Anne the village had become a friendly place, and her activities had created a sense of community.

Through their everyday practices Anne and Angela used space to connect with others, at toddler groups and the playground, and the church. Space facilitated these encounters and created possibilities for friendships, and connecting with others. Both had managed to create a sense of community in the places they lived, through the activities they carried out – Anne by walking to school every day, and meeting other mothers; Angela by attending her local church and toddler group. As a result of their activities, in their eyes, these places were a good place for a family to live, as they provided feelings of belonging, support and care. Angela and Anne created their feelings about community through the largely female spaces of the school playground and toddler groups. I now move on to another place that is associated with the feminine – the home.

A family home

There has been a long and well established tradition of writing on the mutual identification of the woman, the mother and the home (Morley 2000). For example, in his study of the Kabyle house, Bourdieu (1979) considered that different areas of the house and between the house and the world outside resonated with distinctions between male and female culture. Homes have also been described as imaginary spaces imbued with nostalgia, and with feelings such as attachment, belonging, desire and intimacy (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Bachelard (1958/1994) writes that

the house is the first universe for the child, and he suggests that we have great attachment to the house we grew up in, that it fills our adult dreams. However, these romantic notions of home ignore the experiences of women for whom home is a workplace; and feminists point out that the home can also be associated with feelings of fear, violence and alienation.

Places, including homes, are never finished but are always becoming, Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995) pointing out that processes of building and maintaining houses are often linked to the temporality of household composition and ongoing need. Extensions are a way of reappropriating space, and remodelling it to the needs of the family. When I carried out the interviews, some of the families were engaged in improving the home, by carrying out extensive decoration, or had recently extended their home.

Gabby's house had been recently extended to provide day-to-day living space for their triplets and older daughter, including an extra bedroom. She described it as a necessity, because of the large family size, and also described it as a godsend, as it had made her life easier as a mother. She related how toilet training the triplets was easier for her once she had the downstairs toilet; and she had a large open-plan kitchen-diner, which meant that she could keep an eye on the children playing, whilst she was in the kitchen.

The extension represented the family's investment in the home, as it had cost them time and money. They had largely financed it themselves, and she talked about her frustration that they were not entitled to any financial help from the council, for example, despite having had triplets. This 'Do It Yourself' approach has been identified by Rosenberg (2005) who suggests that the 'DIYisation' of society is a combined process of privatisation and individualisation, a society which demands self-production and self-sufficiency. This was the case for Gabby and her husband,

the extension was something they had done by themselves. Although her husband was not a builder, he had constructed most of it to save money, learning how to do it by watching the first part of the extension being built.

The extension began as a necessity, because with the arrival of the triplets the family needed more space. However, it seemed that the house evolved into Gabby's idea of an ideal home, her fantasy of what a family home should look like. People are spending more time and money on the self and the home, than ever before, and those who spend time and money on the home are hoping that their lives will be transformed (Brunsdon, 2003). Brunsdon considers that such lifestyling means that our dreamscapes have become domesticated – we look for fantasy and escape in our back gardens and on our dinner tables. Thus an extension can mean a fantasy home. Gabby's extension was a process of her and her husband imagining a family home, with her family inside it, and carrying out the work to make that happen.

Alison Clarke (2001) has considered how decorating practices are related to the construction of ideal worlds. Extending her home not only meant increasing living space, but also meant that Gabby was also able to indulge her desires in decorating her home in a particular way. When I visited her home to interview her, we sat in the living room. It was extremely tidy, and minimalist in its style, and there were no toys. In my fieldnotes I wrote that it was

“a very, very tidy room, bare, beige with large brown leather sofa. There were brown curtains at the window with big holes in the top, where the curtain pole threaded through. There was a corner sofa, and an expensive, large TV in the corner. There was an expensive red bowl on the fire place, which was marble and pine but quite plain.”.

Contemporary DIY culture has transformed the home from a domestic dwelling—a place of security, comfort, rest and self-exploration—into a place of "the modern"

and "metropolitan" (Rosenberg, 2005). This was the case for Gabby's room, where it seemed that much time and money had been spent. Everything matched, and there were few indications that children lived there. Its minimalism made it look as if it had come out of a catalogue. In addition, through the furnishings of her living room, Gabby was making a statement about her taste and values.



Gabby showed me a photograph of the sofa in her living room, with three pairs of children's slippers tidied alongside.

She said:

"and this, is all in bed, toys out the way, tidied up, I've got my room back".

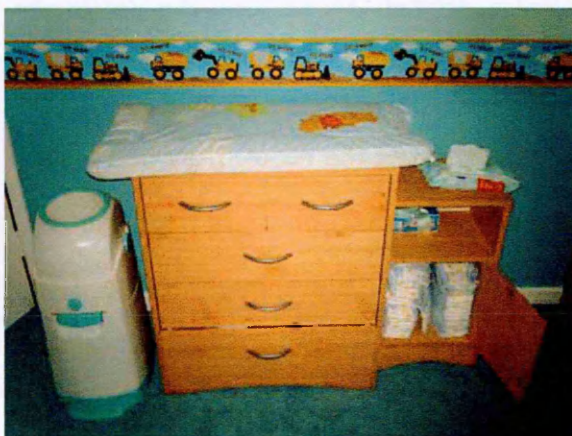
In this simple scene, can be seen her brown sofa, and the beige carpet, all matching. She said that although her husband said that she wanted to eradicate any evidence they had children, for her it mean that the day was over, the toys were put away, and she could relax, because she wouldn't be looking at a pile of toys in the corner. This idea of zoning by time is something I return to later in this chapter. I now move on to a place in the home that is given much importance by their mothers – the children's bedroom.

Children's bedrooms

Not only are ideas of family associated with geographical space and ideals of home, within the home, there are certain rooms that are particularly associated with the idea of family, such as the living room, and children's bedrooms. A child's bedroom, decorated and furnished by its parents, perhaps before it is born, represents an investment in the idea of childhood, and demonstrates the love of the parents.

Pointing to recent research which suggests changing patterns of intimacy in families, where individuals are free to be creative in how they constitute kin networks, Gabb (2008) contends that it does not diminish the significance of parent-child relationships. Instead, she suggests that the significance of children is increased, situating children as the means to counteract the transience of adult-sexual couple relationships. The care taken by parents over the decoration of their children's bedrooms can be interpreted as the child being the object of contemporary devotion (Miller, 1998), where the act of consumption is a ritual, with commodities as the material culture of love, and that the child is the object of contemporary devotion.

Overall, six mothers took photographs that featured their children's bedrooms, although sometimes this was to talk about mess, or housework. Two mothers talked in detail about how they created their children's bedrooms. Tamsin had taken two photographs of her one year old son's bedroom, and together, they showed a brightly coloured and decorated room. One image was of two storage units which she had adapted to make a nappy changer. As well as the storage unit representing being organised, I was struck by how Tamsin had appropriated some cupboards to make something that resembled an item from a baby catalogue.



She and her boyfriend had created this bedroom together, carefully choosing the paint and wallpaper border, using what they could afford to make it special. From

the photograph, it is possible to see the wallpaper border, which features construction vehicles. She said that she was proud of the room - at the end of the interview she chose this photograph of her son's room as one of her favourite photographs, because: "I just love it, I am dead proud of it."

Clarke (2004) considers how the decoration and construction of domestic space, plays a role in the social process of making mothers and babies. She suggests that the nursery, in its decoration, and construction, is a

"key site of desire and fantasy in the context of mothering in contemporary consumer culture". p 60.

Showing me a photograph of the bedroom, Tamsin described it as looking like "a proper little boy's room". This was her idea of what a boy's bedroom should look like, which was achieved through colour, the wallpaper border, and the toys (Cieraad, 2007).



Not only had Tamsin and her boyfriend jointly decorated the room, they had also bought some of the toys together, whilst she was pregnant, on a trip to Skegness. Tamsin and her boyfriend had given much care, and time and thought to the decoration, and the collection of toys. I interpreted this as part of Tamsin's feelings towards her unborn child, to provide everything he might need, because she herself had lost all of her possessions, when she had to leave her mother's house. The fact that she and her boyfriend had made it together, for their unborn child, made this

room more important, their actions demonstrating that he was a much wanted child.

Another mother, Helen, had also taken a picture of her son's bedroom, although this one looked very different. She showed me a photograph of it, which she had staged to represent what happened in the evening after bedtime. In her photographs, she had chosen to focus on the "nice" activities she carried out as a mother, and the "not so nice", such as washing up. This photograph represented a "nice" activity, and she recounted the activities that took place in it.



"we sit and read stories and then he goes into his bed [...] that's the nice time of day."

She explained that one toy was a big sheep, from the brand of *Jelly cat* toys; and that the theme of the room was the nursery brand "*Sleepy little lamb*". She recounted how she used to like going to her cousins' nursery, when she was a child, and taking a peek at "all the teddies and things and cute blankets and stuff." Her son's bedroom evoked the same feelings.

"So I do kind of go in there and I think oh, it's like the baby thing isn't it, kind of?"

Like Tamsin, Helen chose the photograph of her son's bedroom as one of her favourites. For her, it represented a "nice" time of day, "quiet and calm", where she and he enjoyed her reading stories, and these feelings are reproduced in the photograph, with its books, and soft pastel colours. However, at other times in the

interview Helen told me that Isaac was a poor sleeper, and that her sleep was disturbed. Helen related how the bedtime routine, which took about an hour, was a chore and a joy at the same time, because she was tired and still had to cook tea. This suggests that the nursery, and the photograph of it are a fantasy, and that Helen's account was a longing for a particular kind of childhood.

Helen and Tamsin had drawn on different resources to visualise how their son's bedroom should be, and seen through their eyes, a picture emerges of their vision of childhood. Unlike Tamsin's son's room, which was full of cuddly toys, Helen's son's room was full of books - "he's got hundreds". They both drew attention to these objects, indicating that this was what a proper boy's bedroom should look like. These bedrooms also reveal the different tastes of the two women, and the realisation of their desires. Both rooms were boys' bedrooms, yet the women had chosen to decorate and furnish their children's rooms in different ways, drawing on distinct aesthetic ideas. Tamsin's son's room was full of bright colours; Helen's son's bedroom was decorated in more muted colours. These are demonstrations of an aesthetics of childhood, a topic I return to later this chapter.

Pleasure and escape

The particular aesthetics of children's bedrooms differentiates children from adults. From the nineteenth century Romantic period, and influenced by Rousseau, children have been considered to be set apart from the adult world; and childhood has been regarded as a happy and free time, lacking responsibilities. Rousseau considered that as children were from God, they were close to nature; and were entitled to freedom and happiness. He suggested that it was children's natural state to skip, play and run around all day (Hardyment, 1983). The idea of a family home normally includes a garden. Having a garden, and playing in it, symbolises this idea of childhood – that children need physical play and to run around, to get rid of

some physical energy and have some fun. In a garden, a child can be noisy, run and shout; and it is a place of exuberance.

The garden was a place where the women often talked about enjoying their space. It was used for socialising, for example holding a birthday party, or socialising with friends and family. Helen had taken some photographs of her son enjoying himself outside, in the garden, or at a zoo, for example, calling these “nice times”. For her, these photographs represented the joy of being a mother, being away from the household chores such as cleaning. She also told me that these “nice times” helped her to be a child again, a little bit.

Julia discussed the pleasure that her garden gave to her and her daughter. Julia recounted that they went out when the weather was bad, she dressed Mia in clothes that she did not mind getting dirty, and would then go out in the back garden “and roll around on the floor for ten to fifteen minutes”.



She introduced the photograph of her back garden, by calling it “Mia’s heaven”. In it there were a few plastic toys, such as slides, and toy cars. Julia called the garden her heaven too, as she loved putting her washing on the line, and Mia also treated it as a toy, running in and out of it.

Julia said that they would also spend a lot of time in the garden, having a barbeque, or a picnic:

“we have a picnic once a week, me and her, even if it’s just me and her on our own, in the garden, we sat and ate bacon sandwiches, last shopping day, out on

the back step, swinging us feet, all three of us [the whole family], munching on fresh cutty bread, and lovely bacon, it was very nice, it was absolutely, it was lovely”.

Lisa was another mother who enjoyed her garden, for many different reasons. She used her garden for socialising - one of her photographs was of her son’s birthday party, which had taken place in the summer. Whilst she hated household chores, she enjoyed gardening, considering it to be fun, relaxing, and stress relieving. Her garden was also a play area for her son. She said that her son liked to play outside, at least once a day. She related:



“It’s the grass really that he plays on, he loves the grass. It’s just like freedom, I think, this big open space, and he just goes crazy. He runs around in a circle in the ... I’ve got like a heather bed in the middle, and he just runs and runs and runs around the circle like that”.

As Lisa described his energy, I felt transported to the world of the child, full of energy, and who loves to run, just for the sake of running, in a similar way to the innocent child described by Rousseau.

Outside was constructed as a place where emotions could be let out. Lisa told me that she and her son both liked to escape the house, and that she didn’t like her ‘four walls’. She described her son Connor as an active boy, and that he liked to be out and about, to “run about and go crazy”. She said they would get out every day “even if it’s just round to the corner shop”. They would also go out in the rain too, suitably dressed as “nothing can keep me in”. She said that he loved the wind and rain: “he likes to stick his tongue out and eat the rain”.

Lisa's account shows that going outdoors enabled children and adults to have fun, and that going out was akin to escaping the house and its chores. The mothers too had their own desires for escape - going out did not always mean going with children. Donna, a mother of older children, talked about her need for fresh air. She related that she and her husband tried to walk as often as possible, and that she liked being outside. She said that if she was stuck inside, she became claustrophobic.

"I don't like being inside all the time. I like to be outside."

In fact, whilst I was at her home during the interview, the back door was open all the time.

Although going out was often constructed as escape, at times it could also be associated with danger. Other women spoke about the difficulty of moving around outside, with their children, talking about the need to keep them safe, and control them, so that they did not put themselves in danger, on the road. Their talk tended to focus on the difficulties of getting about. For example, Kay trying to control two young children "a nightmare", as they had no idea of road safety.

However, for Gabby, going out did not constitute escape, but meant that at times she felt scrutinised as a mother. She related that as a mother of triplets, in public she was sometimes the centre of attention, which she did not like. She described how, in the supermarket, people would talk about her, and point her out.

"People were talking about me before I even got to the supermarket because the baker might have [said], do you know what I mean ... there's a woman in with triplets, have you seen her."

She also reported a time when she had "lost it" in public, on her way to fetch her eldest daughter from school. At that time, the triplets had to take turns in the

double pushchair, and whilst they were swapping over, one had run into the road, whilst “the other one’s kicking up about getting back into the pushchair”. She said that she just screamed.

“Everybody was around, and I saw all these people look round at me, and I just walked to school crying my eyes out. And I just cried and cried and cried and I was just so, so stressed.”

Although this event had happened a while ago, it was sufficiently fresh in Gabby’s mind for her to relate it to me, as she recalled her embarrassment at crying and shouting in public.

Going outside for some mothers meant danger, and for Gabby, scrutiny of her mothering, whereas for other mothers, going out was talked about with pleasure, as the women and their children escaped the house and its chores. In my data I found that mothering practices and emotions were often related, and it is a topic to which I return in Chapter 8.

In this section I have shown how place is associated with ideas of family – ranging from the geographical space of suburbs and villages, to the women’s homes and the rooms within. I have also shown how, by going out and playing in the garden, children and their mothers mainly experienced pleasure, and I return to the idea of pleasure in the following section, when I discuss the aesthetic pleasures the women took from their space.

Aesthetics and decor

In this section I begin by considering the notion of ideal home aesthetically, and how some of the women I interviewed created their own aesthetically pleasing space. I then move on to discuss the practices of the women in their aesthetic practices in controlling mess, and how these practices were an expression of their emotions. I conclude by considering two women who in their own ways were dealing with these issues of aesthetics and mess.

Considering beauty

Sorting through the 287 photographs taken by the women, some were striking in their beauty, which was achieved by the women's composition of the objects, their framing, and their colour. Everyday objects became a still life, in this case of food:



Many of the other photographs would not normally be considered beautiful. Some of Lisa's photographs, for example, were used to talk about everyday household mess. However two of her photographs showed something more:



Clive Bell (1914) suggested that aesthetic emotion is provoked by works of visual art, and considered that the objects which provoke emotion varied with each individual. Although to Lisa these photographs represented mess, and chores still to be done, looking at the photographs later, I was struck by the attractive hues, and the rooms filled with sunlight.

The relevance of beauty to motherhood may not be immediately apparent. In March 2009 there was a debate on whether Britain had become indifferent to beauty, some arguing that beauty only existed in the past; others arguing that contemporary design concerned the popularisation of beauty. It was concluded that beauty was fugitive, and connected with fragility – it becomes more beautiful because we are aware it is passing (Bayley, 2009). These photographs show that despite the mess associated with looking after children, it is possible to find glimpses of beauty in everyday life. Associated with this idea of beauty is also the pleasure of looking – my pleasure in looking at the women’s photographs, and their pleasure, making their home beautiful, and looking at it.

One of Tamsin’s photographs demonstrated how she created beauty in her everyday surroundings. It was a picture of the view out of her kitchen window, something she looked at every day as she washed the pots, framed by flowers arranged in vases.



The photograph has its own beauty too - in its composition, and complementary colours.

Their own space

Tamsin's action of creating beauty was something that other women I interviewed had considered, in their decor, choice and arrangement of furniture, although it was not a major focus of the interviews. It is considered difficult for women to make space of their own (Madigan and Munro 1990), however, two mothers, Chris and Donna, both considered their living room to be their room, which they had decorated to their taste. They had not thought to take a photograph of these rooms, but I described them in my fieldnotes.

I wrote that Chris' living room was

"all pastels – lilac, yellow and green with lots of candles and hanging things. It felt light and airy, the shelving was pale wood".

I liked the atmosphere of the room, and felt it was calming. Talking about the room she told me that her husband considered her ornaments to be clutter, but that she liked lots of "nice things" around her. She said that the children were allowed in there, but that they were trying to keep the room for the adults.

Donna's room was striking. She and her family lived in a 1930s semi detached house, and her front room was decorated in the style of that period. It was noticeable in the simplicity of its decor - there was no carpet, only floorboards; and there were a few items of brown furniture, dating from the 1930s. Compared to

modern living rooms, it was pleasing in its austerity, and like Chris' room, it felt calm. She related how she had decorated the room according to a mental picture of how she wanted it. Like Chris, she, and not her husband, had chosen the decor. She said that it was her favourite room, and that the chair she was sitting on, was her chair.

Various writers have described the home as a site of identity work (Cieraad, 2007; Jackson and Moores, 1995); and Hurdley (2006) has considered that the home is a setting for the enactment of the self. As their space which they had decorated to their choice, Chris' and Donna's rooms were an expression of their identities. Whilst there may have been other areas of the house that they would like to change, they had managed to create their own space, and during the interview displayed the pleasure they experienced in their own rooms.

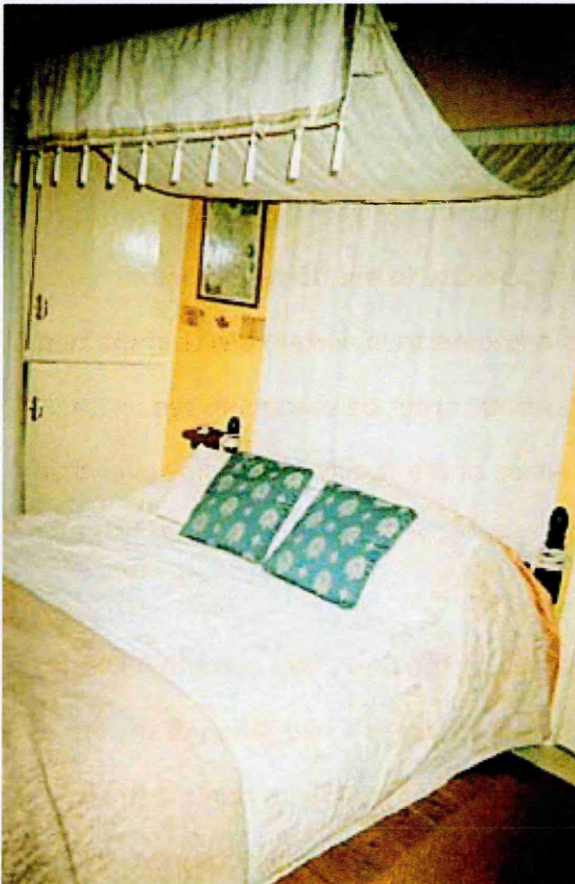
Two other women had taken photographs of their beds, which to them represented a place of retreat, and a place where they would like to spend time alone.

Bachelard (1958/1994) has written that home is a series of places with their own memories, imaginings and dreams. Carol and Penny associated their beds with the pleasure of having time to themselves, to sleep and to read. However, unlike Chris' and Donna's living rooms, the beds represented their longing for something they were no longer able to have –space and time to themselves, in bed.



Showing me her photograph, taken in low light, Penny told me that she used to love “working nights”, because when everyone else was at work, she would curl up in bed, and “have a wonderful sleep”. She said that as she no longer worked,

she missed that opportunity to be able to lie in, in the morning, and to have time for herself. Her bed symbolised a time in the past when she had her own space, and time to herself.



Carol also showed me a photograph of her bed. She and her husband shared the room with their 13-month old daughters, and as a result she did not get enough time in her bed. She told me that before they were born she used to go to bed at 10 o'clock every night, and read for an hour. Focusing uniquely on her bed, the photograph not only represents her longing for space and time to read, but also suggests that this is a fantasy space of opulence and luxury.

Other women had considered aesthetic sensibility in other, communal rooms in the house. Decor, and what they looked at, was considered by Julia and Kath. They talked about their children's pictures, and whether they hung them up. Julia related

how, when her daughter had done some artwork, she would hang it on the kitchen wall, to show that she was proud of her daughter's work. However, she said that she never put anything on the wall above the kitchen sink where she spent a lot of time.

"it is absolutely gorgeous to have a child do paintings for you, and it's nice to look at, but not constantly, not all the time, in your face, you've got to have a mummy area".

Kath related that she didn't hang up her son's pictures, because there was nowhere to put them. Both Julia and Kath were concerned to keep areas of the house free of children's objects, to retain a more adult identity in certain areas. The creation and maintenance of adult space was a boundary-making practice, which was something that preoccupied many of the women I interviewed, as they tried to control the mess of childhood.

Mess, emotions and boundaries

Julia and Kath's examples show that creating beauty in the home was often achieved by restricting children's activities and objects in certain areas of the home. Other mothers attempted to achieve an aesthetic order by managing the paraphernalia of childhood, in the shared space of the family home, however this was not always easy to achieve.

A messy home, with children's toys spread out on the floor, was something with which I was familiar. It was the focus of the photographs I had taken of my life as a mother, in May 2006 (and which I subsequently used to show to other women, when I was recruiting them to my study). This feeling was familiar to many of the mothers I interviewed, and in Chapter 4 I showed photographs of toys spilling out on the floor, or toys which were too large to tidy away. Mess is an inevitable aspect of everyday living, as the home is a lived in space, however, it does not fit easily with the ideas of ideal homes, and the aestheticisation of space. Women have to

negotiate the tension between the home as place of comfort and the home as a potential area for display, open to scrutiny from visitors (Hunt, 1989). Many of the mothers' activities were attempts to manage the mess created by children's toys by using storage boxes, although this was not easy to achieve.



Because of their shape and size, some toys did not fit into the dedicated storage units, as shown in this photograph taken by Helen.

Some had adapted existing cupboards for toys, however, this was not always aesthetically pleasing to the mother, the storage consisting of uncoordinated storage units.



Showing me her photograph of her children's toy room, Penny related that they had 'run out of money' so that she was not able to buy wicker baskets as planned, but instead had to use old chests of drawers, which she said did not match.

Two mothers were striking in the control they had over their children's toys. Kath told me that each time her son played with something, he put it away before taking something else out. Julia related how she and her daughter put away her toys three times a day: before lunch, before tea and in the evening. However, other mothers were not able to achieve similar standards. Some said that they lacked the time or energy to tidy up. Others said that they hated tidying up after the children, and

some said that they found it hard to tidy up whilst their children were there, because they undid it.

One solution to the problem of mess was through compartmentalising activities, either by time, or through use of space. The time zoning of rooms was noted by Munro and Madigan (1999), who found that in the living room, children had priority early on in the evening, adults later. This applied to the women I interviewed – most tried to tidy up in the evening, to regain their space. If they had two downstairs rooms, some mothers might make one room for toy storage and play, and other their best room. They would let their children play in the 'best room', but perhaps the toys were taken away every night, or the children might play in it at certain times of the day only.

Lisa described how she tried to keep the living room as her room, and the back room as the toy room, where toys were kept. She said that it was important to have a space where she "did not feel like a mum", and that because children "took over your life so much", it was important for adults to have their own space. Zoning by time in this way is creating boundaries, in the same way that Kath and Julia created boundaries by retaining adult space.

At times, boundaries were often physical items, as at times the home was considered to be a danger zone, rather than a place of safety. Helen talked about needing to protect her son from danger, in her interview she often talked about the safety of her son in the home, and talked about protecting electric sockets, putting locks on cupboard doors, and preventing objects from falling on his head.



Adele had taken a photograph of her daughter, behind a stair gate. She told me that one of her considerations was safety first, in everything that she did. She said that part of being a mum, was having to be constantly vigilant.

As can be seen from the photograph, zoning space sometimes meant using ugly and unaesthetically pleasing objects. In addition, the idea of keeping children safe with barriers seems to contradict the romantic ideal of children running free in the garden, that I discussed earlier.

Producing order in the home through the activities of cleaning, and tidying may have made some of the women feel that they were in control, as the examples of Judith and Carol show later. By establishing control and order this helped them to deal with the chaos experienced by mothers, not merely having children in the home, but also the messy emotions engendered by being a mother.

Various writers have written about the emotions associated with being a mother – such as maternal ambivalence – conflicting emotions of love and hate associated with women's feelings towards their children (Parker, 1995/2005). At the beginning of her interview, Lisa acknowledged her ambivalent feelings about being a mother. She related how she had become “really really stressed” about taking photographs for my research, because she realised that she was taking photographs of activities that she “really, really disliked.” She told me that she felt ashamed, and had a cry:

“I actually sat down and had a good cry about it because I thought well there must be something I like about being a mum surely?”.

However, she reported that the project helped her to identify what mattered to her, and the activities that she did enjoy as a mother, and that consequently she felt better about being a mother.

Not only were the women's emotions present in the home, there were also the children's emotions, which the mothers had to deal with. I had discussed how some mothers constructed going out as escape, to let off steam. Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) considered how mothers managed their daughter's emotions, and how the strategies differed, depending on women's social class. For middle class mothers, conflict was dealt with by intellectualisation, the irrational transformed into the rational. On the other hand, working class girls were given space to vent their emotions. Julia related how by making an activity into a game she helped her daughter to deal with her destructive mood:

"I get her a load of paper out, let her scribble on them, screw it up and throw it and play get the balls of paper in the bowl, or whatever, you know, you can sort of turn a destructive temper, temperament, into a game, where all that destruction and anger and negativity just comes out of her in a game".

Julia was acknowledging her daughter's emotions, but in a way that was acceptable to both of them.

Boundary-making, and acknowledging emotions were two ways that women dealt with the potential chaos of being a mother. I now discuss one mother in depth, whose account shows her efforts to control her everyday life in her home.

Desiring an ideal home: Judith

I referred to notions of the ideal home for family, when I discussed Gabby, and her extension. I will now examine the notion of ideal home from an aesthetic point of view, discussing Judith, a mother of five children, who wished to achieve beauty in her home, and control the mess. Three of Judith's photographs of her living room,

were taken to discuss various topics such as watching TV, toy storage and mess. Taken with a film camera and a flash, they look dark and illustrate very well the utilitarian feel of Judith's living room, where we sat for the interview.



Garvey (2001) suggests that rearranging furniture can provide a person with a sense of agency over their emotions –having a clean and tidy house can also have the same effect. During the interview, Judith mentioned a few times that she had just begun to employ a cleaner. She related how it made her feel better about the mess - that if the house was messy, it was

“mess on top of clean rather than mess on top of dirt”.

It seemed that having a clean house had been a source of anxiety for Judith, and employing a cleaner meant that she had regained some control over her life.

At other times, Judith had talked about the difficulty of keeping her family clean, the impossibility of ironing all their clothes, and giving each child sufficient attention. The rest of her life might have felt chaotic, looking after five children, but once she had a cleaner, she was able to ensure that her house was clean and tidy. Whilst the cleaner was maintaining her home (and by extension her family), I felt that employing a cleaner was primarily for her, and represented Judith receiving respite and care from her role as mother.

Judith's interview was characterised by regret that because of her family circumstances, she was no longer able to do the "nice things" in life, such as meeting friends over coffee, but instead had to meet them in playbarns. She talked about the difference between her house and what she viewed on the television:

"you know like in adverts and things, and they have these beautiful smiley children who do everything they're told and look neat, and beautifully clean houses, that are all totally tidy, and there's never a mess anywhere, and you kind of think, yeah that's what we would aim for, but it's just not what we achieve, in any way shape or form, but it would be nice".

She recounted that she wanted to have a house where the toys and mess had somewhere to go, so that there was some adult space, but that she could not have it. She related that there wasn't anywhere in the house where it was possible to say that this was a grown up area, and exclaimed:

"No! this isn't the way it's supposed to be!"

At the end of the interview I asked her what story she was trying to tell with her photographs. She talked about how she imagined her life was going to be, before she became a mother:

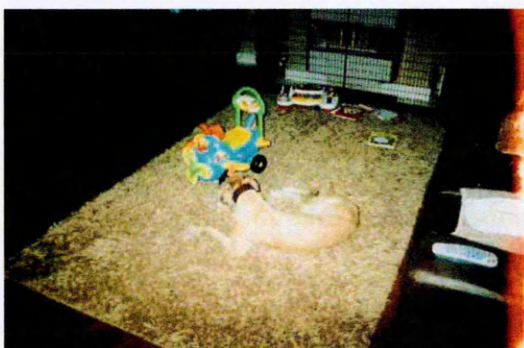
"you kind of imagine it's going to be like it is on the telly you know, sweet children and clean houses and neat, do you know what I mean".

Instead, she said that her days were characterised by dull monotony, "it's every day you've got to go through the let's have, trying to find 19 things for you to eat, let's find you some clean clothes, let's do the washing, let's do the, it's just the daily, the fun bits don't seem to, you know, you have the fun bits, and you remember the fun bits but it's you know, they're few and far better compared with the daily, let's just try and survive today, let's get through today".

It seemed that when Judith said "this isn't the way it's supposed to be" she was not simply talking about the appearance of her home, but that she was also referring to her life. Her life as a mother was not how she imagined it would be, and compares unfavourably with what she saw on TV. In addition, Judith was unable to display and enjoy her taste through her home, because of her large family, their limited income, and the lack of space. Her story was not simply about wanting a pleasant aesthetically pleasing house, but also about having a pleasant life.

Achieving an ideal sensory home through cleaning: Carol

My discussion of Judith shows that one way of achieving beauty in the home can be through controlling mess, and that having a clean home can make a person feel in control. In this section I consider Carol, who presented herself to me as someone concerned about cleanliness, telling me that she spent perhaps two hours every day cleaning.



Looking at this photograph, Carol talked about her old rug (pictured), which she described as expensive, having cost about £130. However, she discovered that it was not suitable for her twins, because they used to lie on the rug and

breathe in the rug fibres. In addition, she recounted that after a while the rug had started smelling musty “like a dead dog”, and she decided that she had to throw it away.

Domestic settings can also be a site of cultural anxiety, where the ‘private’ space of the home is the object of potential surveillance and judgment by visitors or a generalised other (Hurdley, 2006). With her smelly rug, Carol was worried that she would be considered dirty by visitors to the house. Even though the rug was no longer there, I was compelled to reassure Carol that her house had not smelled of dog when I arrived.

Carol had chosen the rug for aesthetic reasons, for its looks, yet it was not suitable for her children and her standards of cleanliness. Although aesthetics can mean a concern with beauty, balance and harmony, the word (derived from the Greek language) means feel. Salzer-Mörling and Strannegård (2004) suggest another meaning of aesthetics - the knowledge yielded by the sensory organs. This means that cleaning is about aesthetics too – the sensory pleasures of nice smells, and knowing that something is clean.

At the beginning of this section I suggested that the relevance of beauty, and aesthetics to motherhood might not be obvious. However, the experiences of Judith and Carol show how activities such as controlling mess and cleaning, which create a home that is pleasing to the senses, is an important part of their everyday lives as mothers. In the first section of this chapter I considered how domestic space was related to ideas of family. In this section I unpicked this idea of domestic space to reveal that many of the women’s activities in the home consisted of boundary-making practices – controlling the mess of children’s toys, and carving out space for themselves, in the same way that they used material objects to represent ‘me time’, that I discussed in the previous chapter. However, some of the women were

unable to do this, and their photographs of their space represented a longing for a time when they could reclaim their space. These boundary-making practices were often related to dealing with the emotions of being a mother, and their children's emotions.

Conclusion

Through their photographs and accompanying talk, the women displayed their ideals of family and home, and accompanying desires and pleasures. This involved the women's imagining of life in a particular community, in a particular house, and then making that image come real. This process of imagining also applied to the creation of children's bedrooms. However, this idea of family was sometimes undermined by emotions, which leaked out around the edges. This meant that although the women took pleasure if and when they could in their own space, in some of the women's accounts there was a need to escape – the home and its associated activities, mainly chores, were experienced as constricting. This reconfigures the traditional public/private divide, into escape and home.

When they could, the women took pleasure in their own space, which was distinguished from the aesthetics of childhood evident in the children's bedrooms. These two different aesthetics meant that boundary making activities had to take place, to stop the mess of domestic activities, and childhood objects, from encroaching on the beautiful space the women were trying to create. This maintenance of boundaries in the home was a constant process, and very different from the work of connecting and maintaining relationships that was evident in the previous chapter.

The theme of boundaries and differentiation from others was also evident in ideas of a good place to live as a family, and how the home was decorated. Indeed, within the notion of aesthetics, there is a notion of judgement and taste, and this

was evident from the photographs of the children's bedrooms. This draws attention to the benefit of using photographs in my research. The photographs helped me to identify, and to show to others, the different aesthetics of childhood, and how this related to social class and difference. Out of all the chapters, the photographs taken by the women were of the most importance in helping me to interpret the data for this chapter. They were something I could look at, and reflect upon, after the interviews. The space in which they carried out their activities, was evident throughout all the photographs, even if they were pictures of something else. The photographs were crucial when I considered aesthetics, and in fact it was while sorting through the photographs that this theme emerged, I realised that my pleasure of looking at the photographs was mirroring the pleasure the women took in creating their surroundings and space.

In the next chapter I move onto the topic of time, which was another important theme to emerge from the women's talk and photographs. Geographers may consider time and space together in the term timespace (eg May and Thrift, 2001), however as the themes of space and time emerged as distinctive themes in my data, I have chosen to present them in two different chapters.

Chapter 6: Time

Introduction

In the previous chapter I showed how women made their space meaningful, and that making and maintaining boundaries in the home, in the form of tidying and cleaning was a constant process. In this chapter I return to the themes of boundaries, as I show how the women's uses of time was also involved in boundary making, either through the use of calendars, and also making time for themselves. I also revisit the activity of cleaning, this time discussing it in terms of routines, another theme of this chapter.

Time has been theorised as an important part of everyday life (Felski 1999-2000), in fact Adam suggests it is everywhere:

"time is a deeply taken-for-granted aspect of social life. It is everywhere yet it eludes us. It is so deeply implicated in our existence that it is almost invisible".

(1990, p 9)

Adam suggests that studying time is difficult, and its multifacetedness makes it difficult to theorise. It can mean getting older; the structuring of the day by clocks; and the diurnal nature of time.

In the same way as everyday life has been conceptualised differently for men and for women, so it has been argued that women experience time differently to men. In Chapter 2, I showed how theorising on the everyday had considered the everyday to be gendered, that early theories had tended to focus on the masculine world, and that feminists valorised women's everyday life and domestic activities. Felski (1999-2000) suggests that women are linked to repetition, because women are responsible for the repetitive tasks of social reproduction, such as preparing meals and caring for children. In addition, the domestic sphere is deemed to exist outside the dynamic of history and change (Felski, 1999-2000). Writers such as Young (1988) have theorised time as cyclical and linear, and these concepts have

been taken up by feminist writers, such as Davies (1990), who argues that linear and clock time are male, and that these ideas of time make up the dominant structure in our society. She identifies a cyclically orientated temporal pattern, which is more diffuse in nature - a concept of time which affects women more than men.

The accounts of many of the women in this study were punctuated by time. The women marked their stories with time – for example noting the time they ate lunch, or picked up the children from school. Clock time was also prominent in the photographs taken by the women – there were images of calendars, clocks and watches. It seemed that the topic of time was central to my research. During the interviews I tried to get a sense of the structure of the women's days and their weeks, as a way of understanding their lives. Re- reading the interviews, I tried to piece together the sequence of their day, so that I could put myself in their shoes and imagine what life was like for them as a mother.

The gendering of time, and the fact that everyday life has a multiplicity of temporalities (Crang, 2001) are both addressed in this chapter, as it ranges from the idea of generations, and years, to a mother's daily experience, experienced minute-by-minute. In this chapter I consider the forms of temporality that were evident from the photographs and interview material generated in this study. I begin by considering the long term temporality of childrens' developmental stages, and their effect on women's everyday activities, as well as women's talk of the past and the future. I move on to considering weekly time and how women's activities such as routines and marking time on calendars created their sense of time. I argue that as women made choices about their use of time, this suggests that time could be controlled, and in some cases might even be a malleable resource, with the notion of "making time" for themselves or family members. I conclude by showing

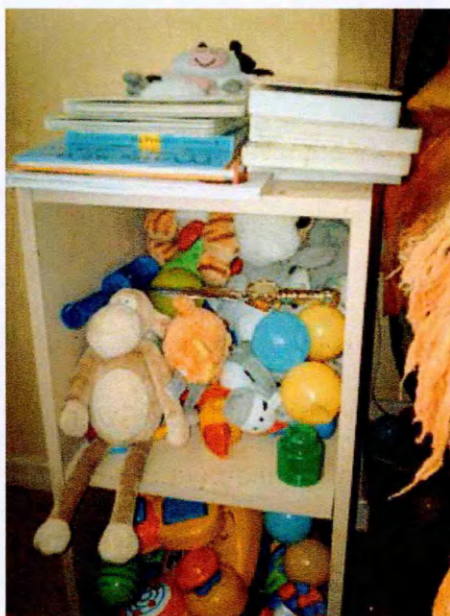
how women dealt with external constraints of time, arguing that mothers experience time as simultaneously constraining and malleable.

The long term – months and years

In this section I consider how the women talked about time in the long term – months and years; their talk of the past and future, including the creation of memories; and how the women's activities varied over long periods of time, depending on the developmental stages of their children.

Two childhoods: mother and child

Sometimes, in their narratives, the women not only talked about their children's lives, but also their own childhoods. Sometimes these two childhoods were linked by material objects.



Looking at this photograph, Tamsin and I talked about her son's books. She related how her father had given her a "Hairy Maclairy" book the previous Christmas, saying that he used to read it to her when she was Jacob's age. She told me: "I didn't recognise it at first, and then as I started reading it, I knew what was coming next and now I can remember it. It is really weird".

Material items can be poignant reminders of childhood, and triggers for memories. Reading the book reminded Tamsin of her own childhood. However, Tamsin had experienced rupture with her own mother – she told me that she had been 'thrown out' by her mother, and many of her photographs, and her talk were of activities to

remake her life with her son and boyfriend. Whilst with Tamsin, there had been rupture with her past self, this was not the case for Angela and Donna, who instead experienced the conversation between their childhoods, as continuity.

In an intergenerational study of mothering, Thomson, Kehily, Hadfield and Sharp (2008) found that women compared their own experiences of mothering, with those of their mothers, either identifying with them, or considered the experience of their own mothers to be out of date. Thomson et al concluded that these two different experiences were linked, and that reinvention was a necessary expression of continuity.

Angela and Donna had both discussed their childhoods. Angela wanted her children to grow up experiencing the same sense of community she had done, as a child and teenager. However, her sister, Donna told me that she felt that she could not give her children the same freedom that she experienced when she was their age, staying out all day with friends. Whilst Angela was saying that she wanted her daughter to experience the same childhood as her, part of a caring community; Donna, whose children were older, was stating that their childhood was different to her childhood.

When Angela and Donna talked of their own childhood, I had a sense of a continuity between mothering practices through the generations, linking their own childhood and their children's. Often such relationships exist in our imaginings and memories (Smart, 2007), and can be just as real as other relationships. Smart suggests that if we have ruptures with people, including those caused by death, we engage in imaginary conversations with them. Lynn¹⁷ related how baking was a new interest for her. Her mother had recently died, and her father had given Lynn her mother's recipe book, in which she had found a recipe in her own writing, from her schoolgirl days. Since then, she had been using this recipe to bake biscuits. She also related

how she had begun her mother's tradition of baking celebration cakes, using a recipe from her mother's recipe book.



She showed me a photograph she had taken of a cake she had baked for her son's second birthday. She told me:

"I said I will make my son a chocolate birthday cake like my mum used to make me, and I did".

Baking the cake, Lynn was taking on the role of her own mother, who if she had been alive, would have baked a cake for her grandson. The death of her mother was something Lynn referred to more than once in the interview, and it seemed that Lynn's baking was a way of connecting to her mother's memory.

Looking ahead and creating memories

As well as talking about their past, some mothers also talked about the future. Ideas about the future are particularly pertinent to childhood, James and Prout (1997) suggesting that children are considered the next generation, a symbol for the future, and adults-in-making. This means that adults' ideas of childhood are often orientated towards their future. Some of the women were thinking about what schools their children were going attend, and said that they had 'put their names down' for particular schools. Two suggested that their routines would change in the September following the interviews, when every day, their children would attend pre-school – they were looking ahead to changes that would affect their routines.

Planning for the future has been related to power and cultural capital (Brannen and Nilsen, 2002), especially in the lives of young people. They suggested that if people

17 Lynn, aged 38, married, mother of one son aged 2

experienced a loss of control over events in time, then planning for the future had no meaning. Some of the women in my study talked less about the future, especially the single mothers in my study, although none of their children were over 22 months – so school, and the changes this would bring to their lives, may have seemed a long way off. It was possible that not talking about the future meant that they were experiencing their lives as living one day at a time, as at other times they talked about the difficulties associated with being single mothers and not having time to themselves.

Thinking about the future can also involve anticipating a time when children grow up, and become less involved in the family's activities. For some women, from their images and the activities represented by these images, it seemed that the women were engaging in creating memories. Donna said she enjoyed school holidays, when she and her 10 year old daughter would go swimming, go to the park and pick strawberries. She also told me about family holidays, paid for by the money she earned as a teaching assistant.



An example of a holiday was represented by a photograph she had taken of a recent visit to London.

Donna and her daughter went to see the '*Sound of Music*', and stopped in a hotel overnight in London, before her husband and son travelled down to spend the day with them.

Occasions like this were important to Donna. They represented her feelings about family life, and the relationships she had with individual family members. Paid for by her wages, they represented her gift to her family. In addition, these trips were

memories to look back on over the years. Her images suggest an awareness of the ephemeral character of childhood time.

Another mother, Helen, had taken 27 photographs for my study, nine of which were described as “nice” times, and resembled the typical snapshots that parents take of their children as they grow up. For example, she had taken photographs of her son, Isaac, in a sand pit; at a donkey sanctuary; at the zoo and in a pop up play tunnel. She related how she loved seeing him encountering things for the first time, and seeing his reactions to them. Her feelings about her son’s nursery, which I described in the previous chapter, involved a longing for a particular kind of childhood, one that was cuddly and ‘cute’. The photographs, and the activities they represented were creating “nice” memories of childhood, which could accompany Helen’s memory of peeping into her cousin’s nursery as a child.



Showing me this photograph, she said that this occasion was exciting, because it was the first time Isaac had sat in a sandpit. “I think that’s the nice thing about mums, it’s everything you do suddenly is a new thing. [...] That’s sort of the joy and the ... you know, when you’re not cleaning you can go out in the garden and play in the sandpit and that’s the niceness and you know, kind of ... it helps you be a child again, a little bit.

When Isaac experienced joy, so did Helen. She also enjoyed being a child again, when she could play with Isaac, and could leave the chores. McCrossen (2005) considers how recurrences of time function as powerful settings of memory. For

Donna, summer seemed to be the timespace of her happy memories of childhood and motherhood. For Helen it was when the weather enabled her to play in the garden with her son.

Dealing with developmental stages

In the same way that time is divided into months and weeks and years, so childhood is divided into stages, as if children move from one to another, rather than the process being a gradual flow. The notion of 'developmental stages' conveys the idea of progress - a child's gradual improvement and moving forwards to join the adult world. Thomas and Bailey (2009) consider that this is a facet of linear time, as

"linear time reflects the idea of time chronologically moving forward into the future, and underlying this concept is a sense of continuity and temporal progression" (p 614).

A child's progress is associated with important markers, which are often used as measures of "progress" by healthcare professionals. There were 35 children in my study, 27 were under school age, the time of life in a child when developmental milestones occur, such as learning to walk, eating solids and going to the toilet. Children of this age may also experience sleeping problems, and difficult behaviour such as biting, kicking, fighting or hitting (Department of Health, 2006). As a child changes, so the mother has to adapt. This suggests that time will be experienced differently, depending on the different tasks of mothering, associated with the particular age(s) of the child.

The women I interviewed were all involved in managing particular child behaviours, and experienced this idea of stages in different ways, either experiencing the immediacy of the challenges of a particular developmental milestone, such as potty training, or were able to look back and reflect on a particular stage. Others used the idea of stages as reassurance that life would change, perhaps for the better.

Lisa Baraitser (2008) suggests that mothers experience time in a new way, in a different way to non mothers. She considers that mothers are constantly thrown into the immediate, responding to new situations from a changing child. Lisa recounted how she was trying to potty train her son, Connor. There was an immediacy in her account, because this was a stage that she was actively involved in, at the time of the interview. She described that he would ask to sit on his potty, sit on it for 30 seconds, and then run off, before weeing in the corner of his cot. He would then laugh, and Lisa would get cross with him. She explained that it involved a lot of work, because she had to keep on clearing it up, and cleaning the carpet. She related that it upset her, and that she felt frustrated. Whilst she was able to reflect on the actions she had taken to help train him, her account was vivid and detailed, and full of emotion.

Other women were able to talk retrospectively about how they had dealt with 'stages'. Here, there was less emphasis on the minute by minute details, but a reflection on how hard it was.



Showing me this photograph, Gabby explained that this was the downstairs toilet, which she described as a godsend. She described how her life would be, if she did not have this toilet, giving the example of her mother-in-law's house, which had a long garden. Gabby said that when she and the triplets were at the bottom of the garden, one would want to be taken to the toilet which was in the house, upstairs. She related that

she would ask if the others wanted to go, but they would not. She recounted that she would take one, come back and then another would want to go. She explained that it made her very tired. She said that with the toilet shown in this photograph, that the triplets could take themselves to the toilet. However, it still involved some work for her, as she would clean it every evening.

The notion of developmental stages has been considered normative. Parents are often expected to monitor normality and detect deviant behaviour, that is, behaviour that is not following these norms (Urwin, 1985). However, in academia, childhood is now understood through children's experiences rather than as a series of developmental stages interpreted by adults (Gabb, 2008). The women I interviewed used the idea of stages as reassurance, that a difficult stage would not go on for ever. With five children, four under school age, including 12 week old twins, Judith told me that she knew her life as it was at the moment was not going to last forever, and that this thought kept her going:

"I know, like this stage, I'm going to get a full night's sleep soon, sooner would be better than later, but I know it will happen, like I know going out is going to become easier as time goes on, at the moment, you know, 20 minutes to get them into the car is just a bit of a nightmare".

Judith was using the idea of developmental stages to help her to structure her experience of being a mother. Another mother, Natasha, explained how she used a spreadsheet to structure the material objects involved in being a mother, and to plan ahead. She told me that her friend, Elaine, (whose child was 14 months older than Natasha's) had given her much advice, including a spreadsheet listing items - everything she would need as a mother. The spreadsheet had been passed from another friend at work, who had had a baby the year before. This spreadsheet, passed from mother to mother, involved being organised, and was an attempt to

structure the experience of motherhood, something which can be very chaotic. In addition, it was reworked by each woman, to appropriate it for their own use.

As I read through the women's accounts, and sorted through their photographs, I became aware of the significance of structuring devices in the women's lives as mothers, not simply spreadsheets, but calendars too, and I discuss these in the next section.

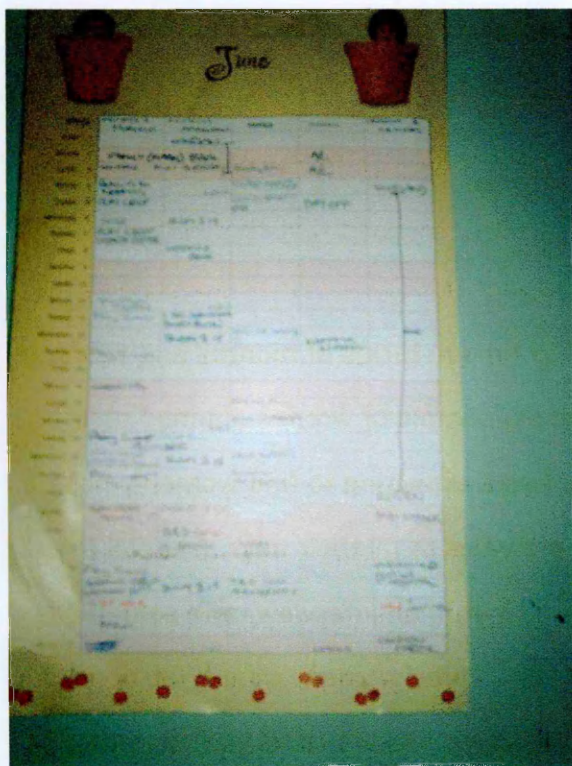
Managing time: Calendars

Whereas in the previous section I considered time in terms of months and years, in this section I discuss weekly time, and how my sample of women planned their activities. Recruiting mothers to my study, I was expecting to find women whose time lay heavy on their hands, looking for activities to fill their days. Instead I found women who were busy, finding it hard to fit in an interview, and sometimes needed a calendar to coordinate their activities. Three women, all stay-at-home mothers, had taken photographs of their calendars. Elias (1987/1992) suggests that symbols of time, such as calendars, help individuals to structure what is in continuous flow, and that they suggest a regularity and evenness quality to time. On the calendars, many of the days had been filled in with items and events such as toddler groups; birthdays; medical appointments; appointments with friends; paperwork that needed doing; and activities that needed to be carried out for school or pre-school. The calendars were like a list of things to do, written in spatial form, and were used to help the women to plan and control their time.

Adele

When I met Adele, she showed me her calendar, which she had in her bag and used like a diary. Together, we looked at the different pages, which were illustrated with photographs by Anne Geddes. Not only was I looking at her busy months, but also the images. Adele liked the calendar, and wanted me to join in with her

admiration of how the babies and children were portrayed in the photographs. The calendar was normally hung up on the back of her living room door, and she had taken a photograph of it:



Looking at the photograph, she listed some of the activities she had written on there: toddler group, swimming, going to the library, medical appointments, shopping.

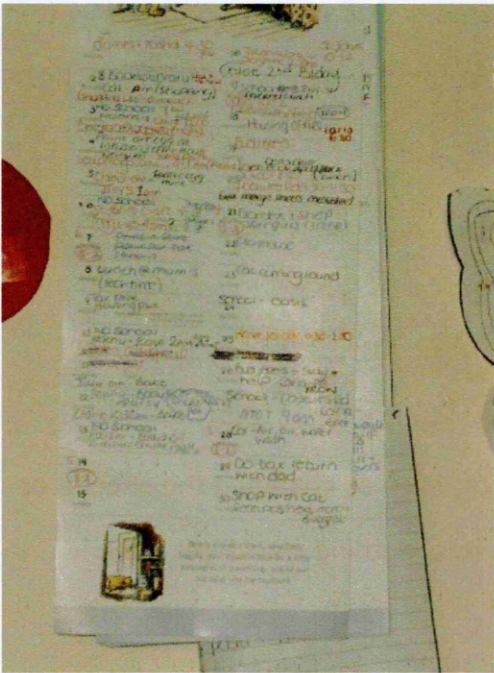
Later, close scrutiny of the photograph revealed that Adele had labelled the columns "mummy's morning"; "mummy's afternoon"; "notes"; "Daddy" and "Grandma and Grandad". She was using the

calendar to keep track of the movements of significant people in the lives of her and her daughter, who were involved in helping her look after her daughter. The boxes were a visual representation of the boundaries that she put around these relationships. She was using her calendar to balance her two conflicting needs – to receiving the support she required in her everyday life, whilst maintaining boundaries – 'controlling' when her daughter could see her ex-husband.

Kay

Kay also showed me a photograph of a page of her calendar, with an activity written down for almost every day. Like Adele, not only had she added social activities, such as parties and toddler groups, but she also used the calendar to write down financial activities, such as "Housing office" and "next months' budget". Kay related that she lived by her calendar, and that without it, she would be

“absolutely lost”. She suggested that the way in which she used her calendar was a continuation of the person she used be, before she became a mother. She said that she used to be “calendar and diary mad”, but that since she having children she used her calendar more than her diary.



As we looked at the photograph, she said that every month was the same. She explained that they did quite a lot of activities, and that she tried to go out most days with her daughters.

She told me that when she turned over the page to a new month, she thought it was quite “quiet”, but that the activities gradually built up until the month was “really busy”. She related

how she preferred being busy, rather than sitting at home all day, and she thought that her daughters preferred it too.

It is possible to think of calendars as freeing an individual from routine - they are like a blank page, waiting for the person to write down what they plan to do. This is the impression I received from Kay’s account - that when she turned over to the next month and a blank page waiting to be filled out, it was as if she could write anything on there – it gave her the possibility of writing her future. However, a blank page, with no structure, could also provoke anxiety, and it is possible that Kay preferred to have a full calendar, knowing that she had lots of activities to fill her days, to help her cope with being a mother. Whilst Adele’s marked the boundaries used to manage her relationships, Kay used her calendar to manage social events, and she was more concerned with friendships, and connecting with

other mothers. Whilst Kay and Adele's calendars were primarily about relationships – connecting or creating boundaries, another woman used a calendar to manage her domestic chores.

Lisa

Lisa had taken a photograph of a pin board in her kitchen. She related that she had four calendars stuck on pin boards - in the hall, the kitchen, the bedroom and the garage. She described how she filled out the calendars at the beginning of each



month with the chores associated with that space, such as changing the sheets, or emptying the bins, saying that if she did not do this, nothing would get done.

Lisa was putting her chores in boxes on the calendar, and making lists, so that her chores did not encroach on all of her life, but were containable. Zerubavel (1981) suggests that the rigidity of a schedule gives freedom to its users, because it relieves them from constantly wondering what they should do, in what order, for how long. This may be why sometimes mothering is considered hard, because there is generally an absence of a schedule, and could suggest why some of the women I interviewed had devised their own rigid routines, in order to provide them with security.

Lisa explained that she acquired the idea of writing down chores from her Aunt, who she lived with when she was younger. She said

"it dated back from the olden days where they'd put like 9:10 doing this, 11:20 doing this and my grandma did it, she did it and I've just got it from her".

Like Angela, Donna and Tamsin, who all talked about their own childhoods earlier in this chapter, Lisa was engaging in a practice she had brought from her childhood, providing some sort of continuity between her childhood and her mothering.

The three women had all used themed calendars associated with childhood: Anne Geddes, The Simpsons, Winnie the Pooh. This relates to the intertwining of the material culture of motherhood and childhood. These calendars were therefore very visible reminders that they were mothers, and that the activities written on them, were largely related to activities related to childcare. What characterises these three women is the way they used their calendars to manage their everyday activities and plan the future. The use of calendars suggests that the women were treating time as a resource, and something to be budgeted (Adam, 1990). Filling in calendars was akin to putting things in boxes, putting boundaries round them; and seemed to be a way of making the experience of motherhood, which can often feel out of control, controllable. Using calendars meant that their time, and their everyday experiences, appeared to be controlled. Their narratives too, were controlled when they talked about their calendars, there were no emotions present, as there were in the previous sections, and as I show in following sections.

Calendars are related to routine, another aspect of time. A calendar would not be necessary if the person carried out the same activities every day. In the next section I discuss the routines of the women I interviewed.

Planning the day and routines

I have discussed how, when talking about longer periods of time, women were able to situate their mothering into a narrative of generational continuity. I have also considered their strategies for dealing with the potential chaos of the everyday experience of being a mother – using the idea of stages as reassurance, and calendars to plan their days and weeks. I now focus on how women experienced

their days as mothers, and how this might be considered a daily routine. In this section, I consider women's daily routines, and whether within their days, they were able to 'make time' for themselves; and how being with children meant that activities took longer.

Living with routine: love or hate

The everyday and routine have been theorised together, for example routines are considered an inevitable part of our existence (Felski 1999-2000). Routines are created by regular events in the day, which act like markers punctuating the day. Regular events include meal times, sleep times, and going to work or school. However, some of the women appeared to be quite flexible with their use of time. When she had no planned activities, Anne said:

"um, on the days that I haven't got anything planned with me mum or me friends or you know I haven't got to go out and do any jobs, then yes, I think what interesting jobs we can do today".

This engenders a feeling of freedom, a feeling of being able to choose whatever activity seems appealing on that day.

Conversely, other women appeared to be constrained by the rhythms of the day, their days largely shaped by food related activities. Meal times were a time when they and their children had to be at home, and they involved a period of time beforehand, preparing the food. Events were also connected, as certain activities affected other activities. For example, one woman related how she could not cook the evening meal until her son was in bed. For another, lunch with her children had to be fitted in before she went to work, making it possible to see how food, and eating, helped to create the framework of the day.

Routine also encompasses various daily and weekly household activities, which I regard as chores. These chores needed to be fitted around other elements in the

women's lives, such as meal times, going to toddler groups, or work, or playing with their children. Sometimes these mothers had a routine which enabled them to carry out their chores, whilst other mothers appeared to be more flexible. Whilst these chores all needed to be carried out, the mothers found ways of making them their own. I have already discussed some of these chores - washing and ironing - in the chapter on material culture. Here I focus on cleaning activities, and how the women in my study differed in their approach to their chores.

Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) identified class-based differences in how mothers approached cleaning, finding that middle class mothers were more likely to incorporate work with play. However, in my study I found that differences between women were not class based. Instead, their contrasting attitudes to cleaning were an expression of how they saw their identities and how they wished to be seen by others. In the Chapter 4, I discussed Helen and Lisa, who both presented themselves as women who did not enjoy their chores of cooking, washing up, and washing clothes, preferring instead to play with their children. For Julia, on the other hand, carrying out the chores was an important part of how she presented herself to me, and how she considered herself as a 'good mother'. She cleaned regularly, and made it a 'fun' activity to be carried out with her daughter.

Walkerdine and Lucey found that some middle class women incorporated housework with play. Julia related how she tried to clean every day, involving her daughter in everything she did- they would hang out the washing together, or do the dusting together. For Julia cleaning was about pride, and related to who she felt she was as a person. She talked disparagingly about women who did not do the cleaning yet who were at home all day, and she considered that it was not hard to involve a child in cleaning, and make it a play activity. Walkerdine and Lucey found that the middle class practice of incorporating work with play was a way of regulating the behaviour of their daughters, a form of discipline. Julia considered

that structure made life easier, and that children “knew where they were” with structure, and that they liked routine and rules.

During her interview, Julia told me that from an early age she had had to look after herself, preparing her own meals and cleaning; and she considered that how she was mothered was inadequate. For Julia, living with routine was viewed positively, providing her daughter with the security which she had not experienced as a child. Routine can be related to identity, Felski (1999-2000) considering that we become who we are through acts of repetition. Through her routine of cleaning Julia was acting out a certain maternal identity. Having a clean home, and a routine, was a sign of care for her daughter. For her, a clean home represented much more than a clean home, but was evidence of being a ‘good mother’ to her daughter.

Julia was the first mother I interviewed, at a time when I was still struggling with how I thought I should be bringing up my own children. Her firm beliefs on raising children made a deep impression on me. This meant that for some subsequent interviews, when mothers talked about the chores, I would ask them whether they involved their children. Judith, for example, said that she used to do cleaning with her first daughter and slightly less cleaning with her second daughter, but once she had five children she said it was “not going to happen”, and that she would rather go out than stay in. This suggests that being able to carry out the chores with children, and make it a shared activity, is not only part and parcel of a “sensitive mothering” characteristic of the middle class, but is also related to having enough available time.

Sometimes, something that might be viewed as a pleasure, was constructed as a chore by the women.



Helen described her son's bath time and bed time routine. She related how it was something she did every evening, and that it took about an hour, including reading him stories.

She told me that she enjoyed this time, but that she was also tired as well, having been with Isaac all day, perhaps from early in the morning. During this time she related how she

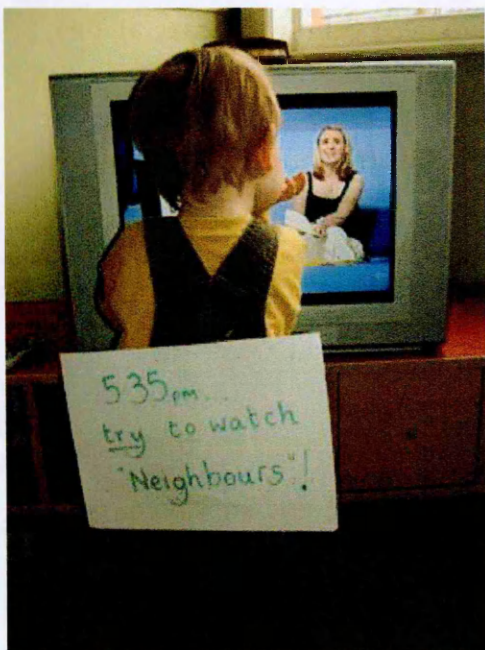
would also be thinking that she was going to have to be cooking the evening meal for her and her husband.

The notion of routine suggests that it is possible to create a structure that enables the chores to be fitted in around child care. Having a routine and sticking to it suggests that the woman is controlling time. In the next section I consider some women who found time sufficiently malleable to be able to find some time for themselves.

Making time for themselves- 'me time'

It is generally thought that women do not have time to themselves because of their caring role (Davies, 1990), yet in their everyday routines, the women I interviewed sometimes engaged in activities which gave them time to themselves. Some women considered their employment as part of making time for themselves, and enjoyed their time there, for example Judith recounted that it was nice to be known for herself, and not as someone's mother - at work she was able to reclaim her non-maternal identity.

Some mothers 'made time', getting up early before their children, to attend to themselves, such as straightening their hair, or doing aerobics. However, some mothers appeared to have no time to themselves, and their children appeared to be always with them. This was symbolised by the number of baby monitors that were on when I interviewed the mothers in the evening, so that often we would hear children's voices as we talked. One of Helen's photographs drew attention to how difficult it was to find time for herself. Looking at the picture, she talked about the difficulty of watching the TV programme *Neighbours*.



She considered that this photograph represented being a mother, and that a mother was never able to do what she wanted to do, because there was always something in the way. We joked that her son Isaac was literally in the way of her watching TV.

A new pace of life: things taking longer

Women's ability to 'make time' for themselves was related to their relationships with others. Southerton (2006) notes how temporal rhythms and practices are in part informed by the practices and schedules of others, such as dependent children, or friends and extended family. This meant that the women in my study had to adapt to the different rhythms of looking after a child, and activities took longer.

Some of the women I interviewed talked about having to adapt to a different pace of life, and talked about things taking longer. Kay said her life had been difficult when her daughters were younger, she said that "nipping to the shop" was an

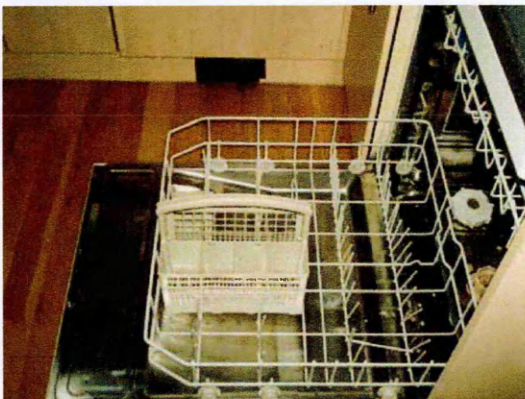
hour-long task, and she described it as a juggling nightmare, coordinating naps, and changing nappies. Judith related how, with five children, nothing was spontaneous, that everything had to be planned ahead, including a trip to the supermarket.

However, one woman spoke of the benefits of slowing her pace. Writing about holidays, Shaw (2001) suggests that they represent a slowing down of time, and are associated with the idea of family time. This suggests that 'family time' is a slowing down of time. Adele described taking walks with her daughter:

"she wants to stop and look at every leaf and every as a mum that can be so frustrating because you're trying to get somewhere in time, but on the other hand, their wonder is amazing, it's wonderful".

This slowing of pace made Adele experience two simultaneous emotions often associated with being a mother – sharing their joy, but also the frustration.

One way of dealing with slow times with children is for mothers to hurry up some activities, to make more time for other activities. Southerton (2003) found that people squeezed activities into specific time frames, creating hot spots, so that time was saved for the cold spots – the more meaningful social activities, which took longer. This notion of hot and cold spots captures the multiple dimensions of time – the notion of ebb and flow. This was a practice engaged in by Gabby. Showing me a series of photographs she described her early morning routine.

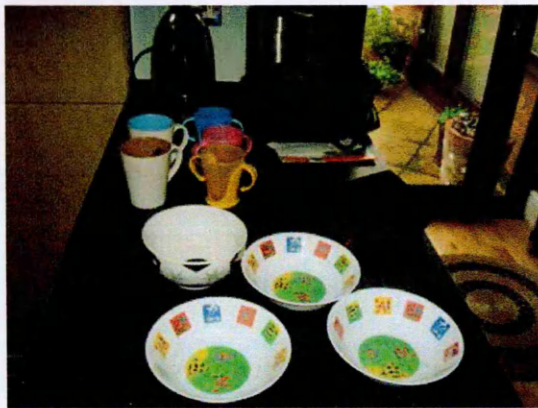


She related that she liked to get up early (6 am) and "just potter". She said "this is my waking up time, so, sad as it is I wake up emptying my dishwasher. (laughs) This is all while I'm having a drink at the same time."



She explained that after she had emptied the dishwasher, she would make their packed lunches (if the children were at playgroup that day).

At the same time, she was making their breakfasts, ready for when they got up, and she showed me a picture of her children's breakfast bowls:



She and her husband both helped to get the children ready. Once they were up, she described it as a busy time.

"It is a rush yeah, it is a rush. Just because, as you know, just kids haven't got a rush in the world, you know, I'll send Heather upstairs to get her ready, and I think oh I'll go upstairs and brush her hair, 'Heather what you doing still in your jamas, come on', [...] she's such a dilly day-dreamer. She like (laughs) just goes into her own world."

She described it as a set routine, and "quite boring", but said that together, she and her husband "got through it", getting the four children ready.

Crang (2001) suggests that everyday life consists of a multiplicity of temporalities. He describes urban space - the repetitions of the rush hour and the quiet spell that

follows on from it. This changing rhythm applies to Gabby's mornings. Her narrative showed the different paces of life associated with being a mother, illustrating the changing rhythms that take place during the day. The description of her morning as she wakes up emptying the dishwasher, suggests a consideration of the minutes of the day, rather than the hours or days themselves. It is this facet of time that I discuss in the next section.

Different rhythms

In previous sections I showed how women controlled weekly and daily time through their use of routine, and calendars. In this section I show how women appeared to be much more at the mercy of time, as I consider how time was experienced on a minute by minute basis. The dividing up of time into units of the same length, as with clocks and calendars, give the impression that this is how time passes, in regular intervals. Yet often, time is experienced as an ebb and flow. Lives are lived within complex arrays of temporal structures describing movement, cycles and rhythmic patterns (Adam, 1990). This was evident in the everyday lives of the women I interviewed. Throughout my data I caught glimpses of varying rhythms, Gabby slowly emptying the dishwasher early in the morning; a mother and daughter cuddling and watching TV, after a child's day time nap.

Four mothers had taken a photograph of a clock, or watch, which suggests a preoccupation with time. They used these images to discuss the various ways of thinking about time associated with motherhood – not wanting to rush; that time seemed endless; and the notion of clock watching. Unlike when some women talked about calendars, when these women talked about time and clocks, they presented themselves as at the mercy of time, and that it was controlling them. I discuss three of these mothers below.

Not wanting to rush: Kath

Kath talked about enjoying the time playing with her son, and that she disliked having to interrupt it to be somewhere on time, like a toddler group. Davies (1990) suggests that when carrying out caring activities, women experience time differently to men. With caring activities, the clock is not as important as the task at hand, and the task itself defines the amount of time to be consumed.



Showing me a photograph of a toy clock, Kath said that it represented the idea that sometimes she did not have enough time in the day to do all the things she wanted to do with her sons; and that she hated the fact that everything was focused around time.

Kath preferred that her caring did not incorporate prescribed, rigid notions of clock time (Davies 1990). Disregarding time and enjoying being with her sons, resembles the 'flow experience' described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) – the experience of total involvement in an activity enjoyed for its own sake, and an individual being totally absorbed in an activity so that they are not aware of the passing of time. Angela was another mother whose experience of time differed from that measured by the clock, but her feelings about her time as a mother spending time with her children, were quite different.

Angela: Being interrupted

Naomi Stadlen (2004) writes that being interrupted is the nature of motherhood, and in her book devotes a chapter to this subject. She writes that

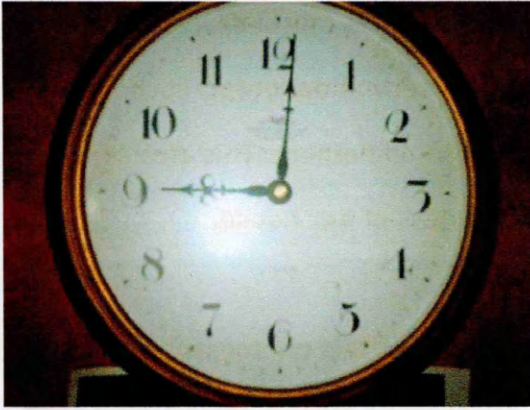
"a mother puts down a whole myriad of threads of her personal existence as soon as her baby cries".

This was the case for Angela, who told me that “nothing is finished”. She related that it felt like she never finished anything with her second daughter, such as feeding her, because her other daughter would need something. This idea of nothing ever being finished also applied to the tidiness of her house.



Looking at this photograph, she said: “everything always seems unfinished. Like that beer [...] that beer would have been put away and it’s just there’s always stuff out that you’ve not quite had a chance to finish.”

As a mother, Angela was having to adapt to a new rhythm of time, from the pace of her working life to being the stay-at-home mother of two young children (aged five months and 16 months), where things were not done so quickly. She used to work full time, but since having children had worked part time. Although she was glad not to have to “jump back on the treadmill” of full time work, she was finding it hard to adjust to not having a structure to her day. She explained how it was “mind numbingly boring at home”, and that she felt better if she had achieved something in the day. Showing me a photograph of the clock, she talked at length about what time, and the clock represented to her.



For her, the time of half past eight in the morning was significant, and could either signify that she was having a good day, or a bad day.

"if it gets to 8.30 and I'm feeling alright I know the day's going to be okay, which I don't mean I'm superstitious

about it, I wouldn't be that ridiculous, but if it gets to 8.30 I'm like oh it's 8.30 [voice sounds positive], but some days it gets to 8.30 and I'm like oh it's only 8.30" [voice drops].

Angela's experience of time passing did not correspond with clock time – which is what Davies (1990) considers to be the difference between linear time and caring time. She related how some days at 8:30 she would ask herself how she was going to get through the day. She talked about the despair she could feel at this time, and how she would just want the day to end:

"the kids are driving me mad, I'm tired because I've not had much sleep and it's only half past eight, and I've got nobody to talk to other than these pair".

Zerubavel (1981) suggests that we are generally able to tell the time of day without looking at our clocks, using cues in our environment. However this was not true for Angela, for whom time dragged or rushed by. Angela related how she had once looked at the clock only to see that two minutes had passed. On other days she said she did not know where the time went.

Southerton (2003) discusses how time is a commodity within the protestant ethic, it should not be wasted but utilised, and being busy symbolises a full and valued life. Angela's reaction to her days at home could be explained by her biography, of her job of being a busy manager and nurse. Angela judged her life harshly in light of her working experience. Where other mothers described activity, routines and

busyness, she experienced a lack of structure, boredom and emptiness. Whilst time is considered to progress at one speed, motherhood, has different and multiple durational rhythms and speeds, the multiplicity of temporalities described by Crang (2001). Time at home with her two young children was experienced not as divided up into regular segments, but as a stretching and a shortening, and at times, time almost seemed to stand still.

Young (1988) argued that gradual modification of successive cycles of repeated behaviour (cyclical time) constitutes linear or progressive development. This means that rather than routine becoming repetitive, each time an action is carried out, it is slightly different, and moves in a certain direction, to produce a spiral, rather than a circular movement (Adam, 1990). This can be applied to mothers. As Angela's children grow older, Angela's routines will gradually change. Rather than time repeating itself, Angela will experience time differently, week by week, and month by month. This is demonstrated by the example of her sister, whose daily routines were very different, as she cared for children who were much older.

Donna: never enough time

Donna had a son aged 15, and a daughter, Tammy, aged 10. She was married to Dan, and worked as a teaching assistant. She took a photograph of a watch.



She related that she took it to show that there was never enough time in the day. She explained that she left the house at 8 am, and returned between half past three and four. Then she carried out many caring and housework activities, which meant that she finished at nine o'clock, or later.

She listed all the chores she had to carry out when she arrived home from work, such as preparing tea; putting the washing in the washing machine; sorting out clothes; drying the clothes; ironing; helping her children with their homework; putting her daughter to bed, and reading to her. She also said that she had to take the children to various activities, or to her friends' houses.

Unlike her sister, Angela, Donna felt that there was not enough time in the day. Angela's day was unbounded, whereas for Donna the boundaries created by work, her chores and caring activities meant that she had to fit many activities into a short space of time. Time was significant to both of them, and an essential part of being a mother, but important in different ways, as the rhythm of their individual days was very different. This difference was related to the different tasks of mothering, associated with the different ages of the children. This made a difference to the sorts of activities that they carried out – Angela was carrying out intensive mothering, and her children required a lot of close attention, compared to Donna's older children. Despite these differences in their concepts of time, their accounts suggest that neither that their time was their own, and that time seemed to be out of their control.

The examples of Kath, Angela and Donna show how time can be experienced as passing slowly or quickly, depending on the activities that the women carried out, showing that, as in Chapter 5, the women's activities producing their sense of space, here, their activities were producing their sense of time.

Conclusion

My chapter has been wide-ranging, moving through the women's lives from their accounts of years; to months as displayed in calendars; weeks and days as viewed from the aspect of routines; finishing by considering time in its smallest detail, how it was experienced minute-by-minute. My data shows that the women lived with

various cycles of time, and various rhythms of time, too, in their everyday practices as mothers. In this chapter, the women's emotions were prominent. In their accounts of their days, and the coping with different rhythms, I heard about the women's frustrations, but also their joy. How dealing with linear time and scheduled activities caused frustration; or conversely how not having enough scheduled activities, made the day unbounded and endless.

Like the preceding chapter, which was largely about boundary drawing in the use of space, this chapter concerned the management of relationships through boundary-making, although in this chapter there were many activities that concerned maintaining relationships and connecting with others. For example, when the women talked about their own childhoods, or were engaging in practices to make memories for the future, they were connecting with others – perhaps in their imagination (Smart, 2007). This chapter was also very much about the relationship between the mother and the child – devoting time to them, and also negotiating and managing the time they had with their children, and how much time they had to themselves.

However, within this chapter, I showed how various boundary-making practices occurred, such as using calendars, as the practice of writing activities and events on calendars concerned zoning and compartmentalising activities to make them manageable. Boundary-making included the creation of routines, allocating time to certain activities; and the taking up of the idea of developmental stages as women used this notion to make their child caring activities manageable, as they looked forward to a time when a particular stage would end. Finally, as some women had made space for themselves, as I showed in Chapter 5, here I showed how women also made time for themselves.

There were various commonalities between this chapter, and others, in the development of various themes. In this chapter the data expanded the private/public theme, which I discussed in Chapter 5. Women had to manage the public, external time of calendars and toddler groups, and their partners returning home after work. In addition, my data revealed the external public standards for cleanliness, and women's private interpretation of this. Maintenance of home and family, which was such a predominant theme in Chapter 5, was also evident here, in the shape of cleaning routines, and through the creation of memories and nice times.

It could be considered that time is hard to represent photographically. However the theme of time was evident early on in the conjunction of the women's talk and their photographs – the number of images of clocks and calendars was striking to me. Indeed, it can be argued that using photographs as a method, and a way of presenting data, is apt for the subject of time. A photograph preserves a moment of time, and in the taking of a photograph, a past and future are imposed on a situation. (Berger and Mohr, 1989) The photographs taken by the women in my study suggested a certain length of time, at times an hour, at other times, perhaps a year. If I look back on the images in years to come, they will also provide a documentation of a particular mothering culture, in a particular period of time.

Considering my data chapters so far, it is not only possible to detect certain overarching themes, but also practices that have been common to each chapter. It is possible to trace food-related activities through all of my data chapters so far. In chapter four I showed how women connected to their children through food – through the provisioning of lunchboxes, and baking together. In chapter five I showed how food was part of an aesthetics of childhood, and had links with how space was decorated by the women. In this chapter I suggested that food-related

activities were important in structuring women's daily routines. Thus in my final data chapter I move onto the topic of food.

Chapter 7: Food

Introduction

In previous chapters I have shown how the everyday practices of the women were instrumental in creating their particular maternal identities, through their engagement with domestic material culture, their place making activities, and their interaction with time. In this, the final data chapter I present the maternal activities associated with feeding the family. Food, and feeding the family, was the most photographed activity for the mothers in this research, and nearly all the women talked about this subject, suggesting it was a practice accorded much significance.

In her work, *Feeding the family*, DeVault (1991/1994) showed that the feeding the family is the work of women, and largely invisible, yet this reproductive work plays a central role in creating the family. She also suggested that the work that went into feeding the family organised the relationships between family members. The images taken by the mothers represented the different activities associated with feeding the family, such as shopping, cooking, and washing up. There were traditional photographs of children sitting in their high chairs, and there were other photographs focused purely on the food. It is my contention that through their photographs, and accompanying narratives, the women largely presented themselves as good mothers, trying to give their children a healthy diet. Through these practices different maternal subject positions were played out.

Throughout my research I was constantly aware of the differences between myself and the mothers I was researching. We shopped at the same supermarket, and so I noticed differences in their shopping habits, the kinds of food they bought, and how much money they spent. Without meaning to, and almost subconsciously, I found myself "judging" the food they gave to their children, deciding whether it was healthy or not. I was shocked to find myself judging them. As I was judging the

mothers, they were aware this was taking place, and they were also managing their accounts, representing themselves to me as good mothers. As I present the data on food, I will also be revealing a more subtle research account of the ways in which cultural and class distinction is created and established between women in the process of displaying and communicating their maternal practices.

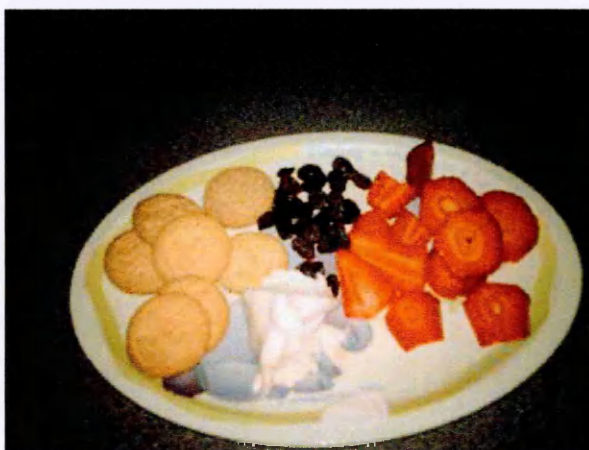
This chapter is based on the significant body of food-related images and talk produced by the women in my study. The way I have organised this material is shaped by the categories that emerged from my analysis of the data. These consisted of three broad themes: feeding children; using food for connecting; and food as an expression of identity. These themes were all connected, in that each played a part in the performance of good mothering. In their talk and associated photographs, the women create subject positions for themselves in relation to discourses about feeding the family. As a result, a range of distinctive yet related maternal identities are constituted. These identities are refracted through a classed habitus in both their performance by the mother and their reception by the researcher and the reader.

Feeding children

It is considered that mothers have an important role in ensuring that their children are educated into civilised eating behaviour, including civilised eating (Lupton, 1996). In my MSc research I identified the significance given to feeding children as a maternal duty, as it was the subject of a whole chapter in the Department of Health *Birth to Five* publication (Sanderson-Mann, 2005). In this section I focus on the importance that the women I interviewed gave to feeding their children, including concerns about healthy eating, dealing with the advice of others and managing children's eating preferences. First, however, I explore how children's food is considered to be different to adults' food.

Children's food

Several of the mothers took photographs of plates of children's food, which they used to talk about feeding their children. The presentation of these meals was similar to those photographed by Salazar, Feenstra and Ohmart (2008) who carried out a visual study of children's school meals. In their research they found that the children separated the parts of the meal, and deviated from norms of what a proper lunch salad should look like, to an adult. In presenting their children's food in a particular way, the women in my study demonstrated that they knew how their children wanted their food to be presented to them, a performance of good mothering.



Julia showed me a photograph of her daughter's evening meal. She explained how they had laid out the ingredients on the plate together.



Tamsin's son's plate, shaped like a tiger's head, had sections to keep the food separate. I was unable to recognise some of the food items and she listed what was there - a sweetcorn ring, rice cakes, bread and butter and carrot sticks, which she said looked like 'giant *Wotsits*'.



Chris had taken a photograph of her daughter's lunch. Chris had cut a sandwich into a circle, using the meal as an opportunity to teach her daughter about shapes.

In the photographs, it is possible to see the efforts taken by the women to ensure that the food was edible by being cut into manageable chunks, and looked appealing to the child. Visually these plates of children's food with its bright colours appear different to how adult food is normally presented. In Chapter 5 I identified that child space was differentiated from adults' space by its decor. In the same way, children's food has been differentiated from adult's food, setting children apart from the adult world.

Seen together, the plates of food look similar, yet by looking at the items on them, they are not similar, and each demonstrates different ideas of what constitutes a suitable and healthy meal for a child. Most of the mothers spoke about ensuring their children ate healthy food, and healthy eating, in one form or another, seemed to be the goal of all mothers. Most interpreted this as ensuring that their children ate enough fruit and vegetables, and that snacks, and chocolate and sweets, were limited. Some interpreted healthy eating as meaning that food had to be organic, and free from preservatives. All of the women displayed knowledge about what was healthy eating for their children, and what they should eat. For example, I asked Tamsin whether she had got her ideas from a book. She told me that:

"it just sort of comes natural. You just know what they need to have – a lot of fruit and veg."

A healthy diet

When the interviews were being conducted, more people than ever were buying organic food, sales of which exceeded £1bn a year in the UK for the first time in 2007 (Hill, 2007). Good quality, simple and locally sourced food were associated obsessions, especially for the middle classes who had the money to pay for this. In the media, there were increasing concerns about childhood obesity, and what this meant for the population in the future. In 2005, partly thanks to Jamie Oliver, a celebrity chef, the government increased funding to improve the quality of school dinners. This meant that my research was taking place against a backdrop of anxiety about food and children. The regulation of children's diets, is both explicit (the subject of formal guidelines) but also implicit (experienced through the comments by friends or internalised ideas of good mothering). This can be understood in terms of the forms of surveillance, and unconscious self-surveillance described by Foucault (1991). This meant that in their narratives about food, the women reflected the media concerns with healthy eating, and expressed the belief that feeding their children was an important role and an essential aspect of maternal identity.

Kath stressed her role in ensuring that her son ate fruit and vegetables, and his 'five a day', repeating the word important:

"it's important because obviously I'm the influence. What we're giving him to eat, what we buy from the shops is what he's going to eat and it's important.

It's healthy and he's getting the right message".

The significance that she attributed to healthy eating is reflected in this image that she took of fruit:



As we looked at the picture Kath explained that she liked to make sure that most days her son had his “five fruit and veg” a day, explaining that it was a nice feeling, for her to know that he has eaten his ‘five a day’.

“I think oh well he’s had a box of raisins, an apple and he’s had something else already and it’s only ... he’s only got to have two more and then I don’t have to worry about it any more today”.

The ‘five a day’ campaign was begun by the UK Government 2004, to encourage people, not just children, to eat five pieces of fruit or vegetables a day. The phrase ‘five a day’ has now entered common discourse and it is widely understood what this means.

Julia was another mother who stressed the importance of her role in feeding her daughter. She related how it was very important that children ate the ‘right things’, as this would affect their behaviour. Even though they did not like them, she and her husband made sure that they eat vegetables in front of their daughter, in order to set a good example. Through the everyday routines of family meals, women are considered to be the transmitters of cultural codes pertaining to food and eating (Van Esterik, 1999), and Julia saw her role as mother as not simply ensuring that they as a family ate healthily, but also teaching her daughter manners and social behaviour. She ensured that the family sat down to a cooked meal every lunchtime, during which time they would not answer the door or the telephone, showing her daughter the importance of making time to eat food.

The examples of Kath and Julia demonstrate the success of the government campaigns to ensure that people ate healthily. This is a process of normalisation

(Rose, 1989) as parents take on the aspirations and norms and desires of government. The women themselves were being disciplined by moral discourses; and were disciplining their children in turn educating their children about healthy eating habits. Because of the importance accorded to healthy eating by the media, and parents, this meant that ensuring that their children ate healthily was sometimes associated with anxiety, as I show below.

Moral panics and anxiety

Women's sense of self is often based on their ability to feed their families (Van Esterik, 1999), and not all of the women in my study felt confident about their ability to ensure their children ate a healthy diet. Young children's nutritional needs are different to those of an adult, and are constantly changing, and mothers may experience uncertainty and perhaps anxiety about how to feed their children. In addition, appetite and weight is used by healthcare professionals as an indicator of health. Whilst nearly all the women in the study expressed a concern over food, making it the subject of some of their photographs, and the focus of their talk, four women in particular talked about food, demonstrating that feeding their children, and dealing with advice, was a source of anxiety for them.

Food, and her two sons' eating habits, featured quite largely in the series of observations I carried out with Sue¹⁸, the first woman I researched. She restricted how often her sons were allowed sweets, using them as reward and punishment. When I accompanied her at the supermarket, healthy eating seemed to be a priority, as she spent quite a lot of time examining the labels of certain food items, looking for their fat and sugar content, and sell-by dates. She called her eldest son a fussy eater, saying that he ate a restricted diet. She related that she considered this to be her fault, because she did not give him spicy food when he was younger.

¹⁸ Sue, aged 39, married, mother of two sons aged 7 and 4 years

Often, she expressed concern that her youngest son did not eat enough, and this led her to take snacks for him to eat at the supermarket, because she felt that he had not eaten enough at breakfast.

Sue's talk and actions revealed her anxiety over her son's eating habits. Lisa was another mother who displayed anxiety about her son's eating habits.



Lisa used this photograph to talk about fruit and vegetables, which she called the "bane" of her life. She explained that her son Connor, would not eat fruit, but that he liked some vegetables. She stressed that she kept on trying to get her son to eat

fruit, and she related how her health visitor had suggested that she eat healthily in front of Connor, to encourage him to eat fruit.

Lisa also talked about the health visitor's insistence on maintaining a weight that was commensurate with his height, but said that she was no longer trying to take it to heart. She related:

"He is who he is, I can't change him, so just let him get on with it. He'll be fine.

He's healthy".

She said that although her son was "skinny", he ate well, and was healthy and happy. Part of Lisa's account about feeding her son seemed to be a rehearsal of a discussion that had previously taken place with her health visitor. Her dealings with the health visitor meant that Lisa was subject to explicit regulation in the form of expert advice. She was also subject to the implicit regulation from her friends' children's behaviour, and her own internalised ideas of good mothering. She related how she felt the pressure of other people's opinions, for example when her son was

at parties, other children would eat carrots, cucumbers and grapes, whereas her son would only eat crisps.

Monotonous and repetitive

Along with anxiety displayed by the women, there was also a repetitive and monotonous element to feeding children, and the family.



As we looked at this photograph of her dining table, Judith talked about the “never ending round of feeding” her five children. She related that she felt that her life revolved around meal times; and that her children were eating ‘all the

time’. She suggested that providing meals took over her life, and that she felt that this constant eating (including snack times) made it difficult for her to carry out other activities, including going out on the spur of the moment. She found this disheartening. She also described the mound of washing up as “soul destroying”.

The functional dining room and table illustrated by this somewhat dark image illustrates the monotony and boredom experienced by Judith. The image also provides a visual contrast with the bright colours of the children’s plates that I discussed at the beginning of the chapter. Those colourful plates were arranged to appeal to children, and to tempt their taste buds. Tempting their appetites was not something that Judith discussed, or something that she would possibly have time for, as she prepared the ‘never ending round of meals’. Judith’s account reveals the darker side of motherhood, one that is not conveyed by the bright childhood objects of material culture, and food. Instead, from her account there is a sense of the repetitive nature of Judith’s everyday life, and the feeling of oppression in her labour in producing the food.

Feeding the self

In families, there is often a pecking order to feeding, when children's needs come before those of the mother (Cunningham, 2007). Judith's account focused on feeding her children, rather than herself, and it seemed that other women left themselves out when it came to eating. The lack of importance given to women's own diet is fittingly illustrated by a photograph taken by Gabby, of her breakfast bowl perched on the edge of a kitchen worksurface, whilst her children are dressed and playing, at the dining table, and who presumably have already had their breakfast.



Gabby related that she did not bother with her breakfast, as she needed the children to be occupied, but then she thought "oh god I just want to have a bowl of breakfast, that's all I want, you know". She said she would eat her breakfast "on the go while I'm walking past shove another mouthful in sort of thing".

The small amount of space allocated to the bowl, compared to the largeness of the room, represents the care that Gabby gives to her children, before she can attend to herself, and eat her breakfast.

The women's accounts showed that whilst they attempted to perform good mothering in feeding their children, for example tempting their appetites with colourful food, it was not a regular activity that was viewed with joy and pleasure.

Instead, they expressed various emotions such as anxiety, frustration, and feeling overwhelmed, related to moral panics expressed in the media. In this way, feeding children was constructed as a maternal duty. In the following section I consider more pleasurable aspects associated with food, by considering how women used food to connect with family members such as their partners and their children.

Food as a way of connecting and maintaining relationships

Household work, such as feeding the family can be described as emotional work – those activities which enhance others' emotional well-being and provide emotional support (Erikson, 2005). Such emotion work is seen as women's work, and is not seen as work, but as a spontaneous expression of love. Feeding the family, women express love and care (DeVault, 1991/1994). In this section I consider how the women's food practices maintained relationships with other people such as their partners, children and other family members.

Eating together: demonstrations of love

A number of commentators have explored how the idea of a family meal is related to the ideology of family, and that the family meal symbolises the family itself (Lupton, 1996). The family meal can be a symbol that parents are parenting correctly (Murcott, 1997). Eating together as a family is seen as important for transmitting cultural values, and is also seen as a way of maintaining family relationships. Cooking retains a central symbolic significance in the culture of domesticity, as for example, a meal is cooked for the husband's return, symbolising his reinclusion into the family group (Morley, 2000). This was true for some of the families in my study, who would wait until the husband came home so that they could eat together. However, it can be difficult to coordinate children's appetites with the husband coming home (Murcott, 1997) and in some families in my study, the children ate first, because they were hungry, or needed to go to bed.

Some women related that they would give their children their evening meal, and would wait until their husband came home and their children were in bed, before they ate together. They seemed to be wanting to capture the togetherness they had before they had children. Food is an everyday object which plays a part in the construction and reconstruction of intimacy and personal relationships (Smart, 2007); and food creates and sustains caring relationships between people, and displays an ethos of care (Warin, Turner, Moore and Davies, 2008). Thus these women's evening meals with their partners can be likened to a gift, from the woman to the man. For example, Kay and her husband were both involved in looking after their children. During her interview, Kay explained that they would try to eat together as a family in the evening, but that her husband was not always home in time to be able to do this. In which case, she would cook a separate meal for her and her husband. She told me that sometimes on a Sunday he would cook for them all. Cooking, feeding others, and eating are body-based acts that create relationships between people (Van Esterik, 1999). These acts are reciprocal, and benefit the givers and the receivers of food. Kay's cooking a separate meal for her husband was carrying out an act of care, one of the many possible acts of care that can take place every day between people and which help to maintain connections.

Talking to Helen, I discovered that she and her husband would eat after their son had gone to bed. However, Helen explained that she no longer enjoyed cooking since her son was born. Before children, choosing and preparing food had been a joint activity, and enjoyable, perhaps taking "all night". Since her son was born cooking a meal for her and her husband became just another activity that needed to be fitted in the evening. Helen's example shows how a couple's attitude to food, and food preparation, can change once when they have a child. Before her son was born, when she worked full time, cooking was a shared activity. As a mother, Helen worked part time and cooking had become her responsibility. In the interview she seemed to be looking back nostalgically to the old days, before Isaac was born,

when life was simpler, and preparing food was something she and her partner did together.

Family traditions and play

Food is a practice that can connect family members, but it can also be used to differentiate one family member from another, and it can be used as a vehicle for expressing relationships with others, such as the women's own mothers. In chapter 6 I discussed how practices can represent rupture or continuity between generations. Carol, for example, differentiated herself from her own mother and the rest of her family, by describing them as "big on cooking" but that she wasn't. Instead, for Carol, food was simply fuel, saying "well it keeps you alive doesn't it?". In this statement Carol was clearly differentiating herself, and her food practices, from those of her family, and at other points in the interview she described herself as "not big on cooking", suggesting that she was not interested in it.

Whilst Carol was using food to differentiate herself from her mother, for another mother, food was instrumental in enabling her to connect with her own mother, who had died the year before I interviewed her. Cultural change has been theorised using the concepts of dominant, residual and emergent by Raymond Williams (1977). He considered that residual elements belonged to the past, and consisted of discourses and practices derived from an earlier stage of society. Williams considered that in a certain phase of the dominant culture there was a reaching back to past values, because they signified areas of human experience which the dominant culture neglected. The concept of residual elements can be used to describe those maternal activities which are rooted in tradition, women continuing practices their mothers carried out before them, such as baking cakes, singing nursery rhymes or playing with sand in the sandpit.

In chapter 6 I discussed Lynn, who used food to connect with the memory of her mother by baking celebration cakes, that her mother would have baked. I also related how she found a recipe written in her own childhood writing in her mother's recipe book. Baking cakes is one way of keeping the memories of people alive, and the traditions that they carried out. Perhaps more than cooking, baking is associated with ideas of family and generations. Cake recipes might be passed down from mother to daughter; an exercise book may contain handwritten recipes from a mother who has died, or your own self as a child. Finding a recipe written in your old girlhood writing can be very evocative. As women are the keepers of family photographs (Rose, 2005), women can also be the keepers of family recipes, passed down from mother to daughter.

Talking to mothers I had found that feeding the family fulfilled many purposes. Eating together as a family helped children in knowing how to behave at the table, and communicated the particular values associated with each family. The making of food was also seen as a play activity to carry out with children, when mother and child could have fun together, in the form of baking cakes, and through this activity the women connected with their children. Eight of the mothers in my study mentioned baking cakes. They related that their children enjoyed the bodily pleasures of making cakes, such as making a mess; mixing the ingredients; scraping out the bowl, and then decorating the cakes. These activities seemed to be just as, if not more, important than eating the finished cakes. Whilst they described cake making as a fun activity, it was also used as an educational activity too (Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989).

Showing me a photograph of some cakes they had made, Lisa talked about how baking was a lot of fun for her and her son, Connor. She told me that watching Connor made her laugh:



"he'll sort of like put his finger in the icing and go mmmmm yum". She said that they had a lot of fun when they were baking. She explained that they tended to bake on a Sunday, because Sundays were "relaxed", and they had the time to do it. Lisa also

related that she enjoyed making a mess. When Lisa made cakes this provided her with the opportunity to act like a child, and to take enjoyment in all of the activities, including making a mess. The fun was mutual, Lisa enjoyed seeing her son enjoy himself, and she also enjoyed the freedom of being able to make a mess, to act like a child.

Not only was cake making a fun activity for Lisa, it engaged some of these senses such as taste. I have already suggested that cake making is a tradition that Williams might describe residual, a tradition from the past. Cake making also represents a slowing down of time, as it can be quite a time consuming activity to make something that can easily be bought off the supermarket shelf. I witnessed this slowing down of time when I carried out an observation with Emma¹⁶. Making cakes featured in all of the three observations I carried out with Emma. I watched her make cakes with her son, Edward; buy cake making ingredients at the supermarket and then saw her cakes on sale at the school fair. This suggested that baking cakes as an activity to do with children, was very important.

Although Emma was very busy, when I was at her house she started to make cakes with Edward. Emma's mother took over the cake making when Emma had to leave,

¹⁶ Emma aged 34, married, with two sons, aged 3 1/5 and 7 1/2

and we stayed in the kitchen, me, Edward and Emma's mum, waiting for the cakes to bake. Edward had a cup of tea, and some biscuits to dunk in it, sitting on the floor. I chatted with Emma's mum, and it felt peaceful after the earlier busyness. Time appeared to slow down.

The aims of the slow food movement are to restore pleasure as a principle and a universal right (Andrews, 2008). It can mean approaching everyday life with care and attention. The slowing of pace I experienced as we waited for the cakes to bake is similar to the slowing of pace I discussed in the previous chapter, when spending time with a child, or being a mother. Baking was one way that mothers had fun with their children and connected with them. Relationships with children were also maintained by some of the women's practices in preparing lunchboxes, which I discuss next.

Relating to children: lunchboxes

I have already discussed lunchboxes in Chapter four, when I considered them as a material item of childhood consumption, and showed how Gabby took care that the branding of them was acceptable to each child. Here, I discuss the contents of the lunchboxes, and the care taken by the women in preparing them. In a study of Japanese lunchboxes (Obentōs) prepared for pre-school children, Allison (1997/2008) found that the obentō was invested with significance beyond the purely pragmatic. She found that the Japanese mothers were bound by strict and almost unspoken conventions in the preparation and construction of the lunchboxes. The contents of the lunchboxes had to be aesthetically arranged, and it was the mother's duty to make the food pleasant for the child. In Japan, there were many commodities sold in the shops to help make the obentōs; and there were also magazines devoted to them, giving ideas about how to construct the obentōs.

In the UK, the contents of children's lunchboxes are also structured and children have expectations about what should be in them – the contents of one lunchbox looks very much like the contents of another. It is possible to buy recipe books containing only recipes for what to put in lunchboxes, and special items for lunchboxes can be purchased at the supermarket. Parents will also tend to buy branded lunchboxes for the children – it is almost expected. Allison suggests that the labour involved in making the Japanese obentō was intended for the child and the mother, it shows the woman's commitment as a mother, and inspiring her child to be committed as a student. Preparing a lunchbox is about the care that mothers are seen to take over the food, and the symbolism of the food – what it means to the mothers and what it means to the children.

The women in my study had put much thought into what food their children would want to eat in their lunchboxes. Anne, for example, put crisps and chocolate bars in their lunchboxes, because she thought that the children were thin, and she wanted to tempt their appetites. She expressed her worries about what they ate at school, saying that the children would take sandwiches to school, yet often returned home with the food intact, uneaten. Giving them treats could be seen as an expression of love for her children, and an attempt to connect with children while they are away at school. A lunch box can be considered as a piece of home, taken to school or nursery.

Talking about what her children ate, Kay said that she would give her elder daughter the same thing every day, including a pot of strawberries.



As we looked at this photograph of their lunchboxes, she listed what her daughter ate, every day: jam sandwiches, a pot of strawberries, a packet of crisps, and sometimes a penguin (chocolate bar) or something similar, and a drink.

For Kay, food was associated with pleasure. The contents of the her lunchbox could be considered seductive, and she was indulging her daughter's tastes, making sure that everything she put in her lunchbox was what Imogen would want, and eat. In order to do this, she might have to go shopping a few times a week, to buy more strawberries, because the girls had eaten them all.

In the introduction to this chapter, I discussed how the family meal was seen as a symbol for the family. In this section I have shown how food was used by the women to connect with various family members, such as their partners, their own mothers, and their children. This creation and maintenance of relationships shows how the work of feeding the family is part of the process of producing the family (DeVault, 1991/1994). In the following section I show how this process of producing the family is further extended, as the women used food as an expression of identity and distinction, differentiating themselves and their families, from others.

Food as an expression of identity and distinction

Nearly all the women in my study recounted that food, and feeding the family was important, and also used food to connect with others, yet there were subtle variations in how they considered food, and in what they ate. Food, and how it is eaten, can also be understood as a marker of identity and difference. Caplan (1997) for example suggests that food is bound up with social relations and Lupton

(1996) argues that food is consumed not simply because it is nourishing, but because of the cultural values that surround it. She considers that by purchasing and consuming food, the values of the food are transferred to the self. Food is considered to be an important site in the creation of family identities, and personal identities too can be shaped and reflected through the consumption of food (Wills, Backett-Milburn, Gregory and Lawton, 2008).

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1979/1984) argued that food and eating was not simply about nourishment, but involved an elaborate performance of gender, social class and identity. He considered that what we consume identifies and renders classifiable our own particular judgement of taste to other people; that the choices that people make over what they eat symbolically reproduces their class position. In a similar vein Warde (2001) writes that life-styles and consumption are critical to identity-formation and re-formation, and that

“people define themselves through the messages they transmit to others through the goods and practices that they possess and display. They manipulate or manage appearances and thereby create and sustain a ‘self-identity’” (Warde 2001 p 557).

In this section I explore the very different ways that Kay, Angela, Lynne and Judith spoke about food, suggesting that orientations towards food can be understood as part of a wider lifestyle which reflects cultural and material capital. In their talk about food (and my reactions to that talk), these women and I revealed our lifestyle values and the extent to which we were similar or different to each other.

Taking pleasure in food: Kay

Earlier feminist writing on women and food concentrated on the subservience of women to their husbands’ tastes and desires (Charles and Kerr, 1988; DeVault 1991/1994), with little mention of women’s own pleasure in the food. Although some feminists have written how feeding others and eating can simultaneously be

sources of pleasure and a burden (Van Esterik 1999), the exploration of women's agency seems to be taking slower hold in the realm of food provisioning. One reason may be because that food might be considered women's 'treacherous friend' (Charles and Kerr 1988) – women desiring it for the pleasure it gives, but denying themselves the pleasure because of the unacceptable weight gain that might result if they indulged themselves.

Although food did not represent pleasure for all the women I interviewed, there were some mothers for whom taking pleasure in their food was part of their identity. I have already discussed the pleasure experienced by some mothers, in baking cakes with their children. For Kay, food was more than sustenance. When talking about food she referred to the pleasure she took from it. Within her narrative there was an associated notion of indulgence, as she indulged her tastes, and those of her family.



The topic of food was first introduced by a photograph of her oven. She said that she liked baking, it was her "release". She liked to bake at night, when her daughters were in bed, she had the kitchen to herself, and she could do it at her "own pace". She related that she liked eating and cooking simple food, which she described as "everyday normal cooking", and she gave examples of what she prepared: roast dinners, pork with crackling and chicken fajitas.



Kay had also taken a photograph of her fridge, which represented the activity of shopping. Kay referred to the butter, saying "because it has to be *Lurpak*" – I knew what she meant – *Lurpak* represents a product that is chosen for its taste, and has associations with luxury and indulgence, it is not considered a particularly healthy food item.

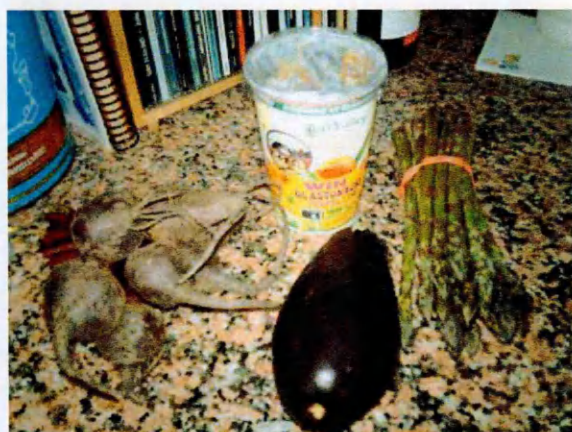
Kay explained that she did one big shop a week, and carried out 'top up' shops nearly every day, for things like fruit, milk and bread, saying it was nice to have fresh bread. Looking at the mundane practices of routine provisioning, Miller (1998) considered how, through the medium of selecting goods, shoppers develop and imagine those social relationships which they most care about. He suggests that shopping is nearly always directed towards another – the person they are buying for. The food Kay lists, that she cooks, and buys, is chosen with her husband and daughters in mind, as well as for its taste. Kay also liked to indulge her daughters' tastes through the contents of their lunchboxes, as I showed in the previous section.

Kay also related how she liked to go food shopping, as an activity. She described that the four of them would sometimes go shopping as a family at the weekend, but that she and her girls preferred to go on their own during the week. She explained that at the weekend it was "so busy", the girls got more irritated and she hated it. She preferred to go in during the week, in the day time with her daughters when it was "nice and quiet" – it gave them something to do.

For Kay, food was consistently associated with pleasure and enjoyment. She enjoyed carrying out the activities associated with food, such as shopping. She did not consider these a chore, nor did she present her daughters' appetites as difficult to please. Her account of food was consistently about pleasure, indulgence and connecting.

Taste and discernment: Angela

Like Kay, Angela had a clear love of food, and she was able to indulge her love of good quality ingredients. She had a clear subject position about taste and discernment. She told me that she tried to buy only organic vegetables; and her meat from a local butcher, because it was free range. She took a photograph to represent some of the ingredients that she cooked with, which were beetroot, aubergine, asparagus and organic yoghurt, and she emphasised the word organic.



She explained that she tried not to feed food from jars to her family, but mostly cooked everything using raw ingredients, including cakes and biscuits. She related that this was because she wanted to know what her family were eating. She did

not want her daughters to eat processed food, or food containing E numbers.

She took a photograph of some of her recipe books, to represent cooking, and she described each book to me:



"Mrs Beeton, it's pretty basic good stuff. And Nigella only has unsalted butter and she likes, you know, proper ingredients and I think Nigella's stuff, she talks you through what she's going to do and then Jimmy and Jimmy's Farm really is

again he does back to basics. He does like ham and pickled cabbage ... red cabbage, you know stuff that's very traditional."

In the photograph there was also a Green and Black's recipe book, which suggests luxury and expensive ingredients – as Green and Black is not cheap chocolate. These books demanded what Angela considered to be 'proper' ingredients, but to someone else they might be too expensive. Warin et al (2008) found that women in their study located their understandings and experiences of food within their habitus, within a particular socio-economic environment. In describing the ingredients in the cookery book, and the ingredients she cooked with, Angela was displaying her taste, and knew that talking to me, that I would understand what that meant. This was more than a conversation about tasty food, it was about "taste", and discernment. At one level I identified with Angela – I too preferred to eat good quality, simple food; however, I was also envious that she could afford to indulge her desire for good quality food, all the time.

Angela was unusual among the women I interviewed in that she did not provide her daughter with 'special' children's food. She listed the food that her daughters liked to eat, such as thai curry, stew, garlic bread, prawns, smoked salmon, grated cheese, blueberries, strawberries and grapes, apples and pears. Amongst the more ordinary items such as stew and apples, the mention of expensive and newly fashionable items such as blueberries and pesto stood out and identified her as a

person of taste and discernment - there were no cheesy wotsits here. Not only was Angela displaying her good taste to me, but her interview was also a display of good mothering, as she took obvious pride in her daughters' broad ranging and healthy eating habits.

Eating out: Lynn

Lynn was another mother who enjoyed food – eating it and preparing it.

Throughout her interview, she displayed a strong interest in food, and it seemed to be a large part of her identity. Not only had she recently started baking cakes and biscuits, she had a qualification in catering and hotel management, and had recently returned to the catering trade, to become a part-time waitress in a restaurant. She told me that she used to work there in a more senior position, and said that she “knew the family” who owned it. She talked about the restaurant with a sense of belonging and ownership. She showed me an article about the restaurant, in a recent county magazine, with pride. Her work identity seemed to be very important to her.

Lynn talked at length about her enjoyment in being able to cook and have a family Sunday lunch. She showed me two photographs of their Sunday dinner, before and after cooking.



She also considered that it was important to instil values into her son, about eating, and sitting at the table. She related how she had ensured that her son Benjamin

had sat at the dinner table "from the moment he was born", because she said that she believed in instilling family values at an early age, and she was proud that Benjamin could behave himself when they eat out. She also said that she was planning to grow vegetables with her two year old son in the garden.

Lynne discussed how food played a role in her social life. She described meals in the past that she had enjoyed with her husband, at restaurants. She listed the ones she had been to, and I felt as though she was 'name dropping' them. She related a time her family had eaten at a restaurant, including her son, and that the owner had given him a toy to play with. She seemed to take pleasure from the fact that they were known there by the owner. However, this enjoyment of good food and the impression of expensive restaurants, was almost belied by the area in which she lived. Her house was in a fairly poor area, a former council estate. For example, when I arrived she was discussing a letter with her husband, about a girl on the street who had just received an ASBO (Anti-Social Behaviour Order). This suggests that the 'name dropping' of restaurants, and showing me the review of the restaurant where she worked, was an important part of the identity that she was projecting to others. Carrying out 'fine dining' she was able to dissociate herself from the area where she lived.

Food was a large part of Lynn's identity, and eating out at restaurants was part of this identity. She was also communicating her values to her son, such as teaching him how to behave at the table, through encouragement of particular behaviour she was creating family values. Another mother talked about her particular values surrounding food and family, and how difficult it was to sustain them when her children came into contact with other children.

Peer pressure and the threat of Others: Judith

I have already discussed how for Judith, food, and feeding the family, was a source of a mixture of emotions, of monotony and boredom. Judith was also having to deal with the changing tastes of her eldest daughter, since she had started school and was mixing with different children. She explained that she had noticed that since her daughter, aged six, had started school, her food tastes had changed, and she thought this was the influence of her friends. She also talked about the peer pressure associated with the content of lunchboxes. She related that many of her elder daughter's friends had crisps, and that her daughter rarely had them, which was "a bone of contention". This peer pressure brought home by her children was not limited to food, she recounted how her daughter had also asked her for a laptop; again, Judith thought that she had been influenced by children at school. Judith commented that she was not happy with the idea of her children coming into contact with other children's values, such as at school, she said this was because she couldn't control what they came into contact with so much.

We discussed what sorts of food her children liked to eat. She related that they asked for chicken nuggets, and that she thought that they asked for them because their friends ate them. However, she explained that they did not eat them, or that they would only eat half of what they normally ate. She said that if she gave them what she called "proper food", such as shepherd's pie, lasagne, bolognese, "you know like a meal", they would eat "fantastically." She was pleased that they ate more of the "proper food".

Judith had taken a photo of a playbarn, an indoor area where children play. She said that this was what she spent "her life doing now", and that she hated them "with a passion". She talked about encountering other people in these barns:

"you're surrounded by people who and I know this sounds really awful but, *people you just would not spend time with*, in an enclosed space with, given a

choice, do you know what I mean, and there's children running around and it's really hard when you're trying to keep, you know, and they have like um, the majority of them will have eating areas in them as well, so you know you're trying to keep your children sitting down and eating a meal and everyone's running around like mad people and you just think it's just too much like hard work. [my italics].

Judith's quote reveals her struggles to maintain her own family values associated with eating practices, when encountering others in public places. We did not discuss who these people were, who Judith was referring to. They were described obliquely as "people you would just not spend time with". However, I knew what she meant and she did not have to elaborate. In this conversation, Judith was treating me as someone who had the same cultural values as her. We had already told me at the beginning of the interview that she had an MSc, and had carried out research as a nurse, so she must have felt safe to express her views to me, someone who had a similar educational background to her.

Judith was trying to instil her values into her children, associated with sitting down and eating a "proper" meals, but by going to places like play barns, they were coming into contact with others, who had different values – people who she would not normally associate with. It seemed that Judith was concerned that despite their upbringing, her children would become contaminated with the values of 'others'. At other times she had related how with five children they did not always have a bath every day, and that her eldest Elizabeth went to school "crumpled", with her clothes unironed. I wondered whether she felt that her control over her five children was fragile, and that if she was not careful, she too, might become the "other".

In this section I have shown the ways in which the women talked about food was an expression of their identities. Through their photographs, and their accompanying talk, the women all displayed subtle variations on the 'good mother',

interpreting this role in slightly different ways, as well as displaying their own versions of taste and discernment – whether that be eating organic food, eating out, eating “proper food” such as shepherd’s pie, or simply enjoying food for its taste. Each formulated their practices as healthy eating, and as a practice of care for their children.

Conclusion

Food and eating practices that maintained relationships were prominent in this chapter. As it is considered that eating together binds the family together, then the role of food in maintaining relationships was an important part of maintaining and creating home and family. Although mainly associated with maintaining and connecting, food practices were sometimes associated with boundary-making, the women ring fencing time with their partners to eat for example, when their children had gone to bed. Boundary work was also taking place in the processes of differentiation when some of the women talked about taste and discernment, and fear of the ‘other’. However, this process of boundary making did not often extend to the women paying attention to themselves, unlike their creation of ‘me time’ and ‘me space’ I showed in earlier chapters. Although some discussed their love of food, they rarely mentioned feeding the self, it was as if all of their energies had gone into feeding the children and their partners. Instead, their indulgence of their pleasures in their food and of their tastes was done collectively, such in the act of going out for a meal as a family, or a couple, or the baking of cakes and biscuits for the family, or for a family celebration.

In their talk about food, the women showed that food was an emotionally loaded issue. Writing this chapter also revealed that food was an emotionally loaded issue for me too, as writing this chapter was hindered by my own issues surrounding food, such as concerns over my own and my children’s weight; and the negotiation of food “rules” with my own family.

The photographs were productive in generating a lot of talk about food, and the topic of food was used by the women to express their more general anxieties about being a mother, and being responsible for the care of children. Those photographs that related to food, and feeding the family formed the largest category out of all the pictures taken by the women, which alerted me to the importance of this topic to the women. In addition, once I began analysing my data, seeing the photographs collectively enabled me to make connections between the ways in which the food was presented; how space was decorated, and the appearance of material items of childhood culture, to identify a theme of aesthetics of childhood.

In the next chapter I synthesise the data that I have presented in these four data chapters by presenting an analysis of themes that cut through the four data chapters, and through which maternal identities can be conceptualised. These include the practices carried out by the women for the purpose of the maintenance of the home and family, which includes connecting with others and creating boundaries; as well as the more personal aspects of the maternal role – a consideration of women's emotions, memories, pleasure, the imaginary and desires.

Chapter 8: Practices of mothering

Introduction

In this chapter I look back at my research, as I also formulate my thesis about the everyday activities of motherhood. Summarising my approach, I explore the cross-cutting themes of motherhood that emerged from my data chapters, and which together constitute my thesis on the practices of mothering. These cross-cutting themes can broadly be divided into two categories: the first category relating to the practices of motherhood, which include creation of the home and family, connecting with others but also the creation and maintenance of boundaries. The second category encompasses maternal feelings, comprising emotions; pleasure; the imaginary and desires; and memory, change and continuity. I contend that together, these two themes of practices and feelings constitute a way of looking at motherhood in the early 21st century in the UK. Before I discuss these themes in detail, I briefly outline earlier chapters.

A looking back

I began my thesis by positioning my work in relation to two strands of research, which I had considered as tools in understanding the gendered practices of mothering and maternal subjectivities. I explored how research on motherhood and domestic space could be understood in relation to theories of everyday life; and how the 'self', including maternal identity, can be situated in relation to the everyday, drawing on an understanding of identity that encompasses a narrative and discursive approach.

In chapter 3 I explained my research approach, how it developed and how I came to research a particular group of women as mothers. Outlining my epistemology, I identified various approaches that I carried through my thesis, namely an auto/biographical and reflexive methodology; and a concern with practices. I explored some of the characteristics and challenges of this approach, before

outlining my method to qualitative data generation, analysis and interpretation. I also described how I constructed a story from the women's narratives, and explained how I used the sensitising concepts which emerged from the different types of data: their talk, their photographs, and my fieldnotes to structure the following data chapters.

In the following four chapters (4 – 7) I presented the data that was generated by my chosen methodology. I described the everyday activities of motherhood, through the practices narrated by the women in my study. I considered how the women's everyday lives were constituted by the activities they carried out; by the objects they interacted with; and the role of space and time in constituting their everyday lives. I discussed material culture, space, time and food, and how through these practices it was possible to detect different maternal subject positions.

In material culture (chapter 4), I considered the different material items of consumption that were part of the women's lives as mothers, and how these objects were instrumental in constructing the women's everyday lives. These included children's toys and equipment; objects they used to express their own identities as women, and as mothers; and those objects associated with domestic everyday activities such as dirty dishes, and laundry. Associated with these objects were various everyday activities such as tidying up, washing or clearing away, the putting away of clean utensils; and caring for the self. The women's interaction with objects, such as pushchairs, constituted their everyday experience, as they used them. As with food, interacting with these objects also constituted relationships - the purchasing of objects, and caring for them, expressing relationships with family members.

Maternal practices were also spatialised by the physical location that featured in and framed their accounts. In Chapter 5 I considered how, through their practices,

the women constituted their everyday life through space. Through their spatial practices they enacted ideals of home and family and attempted to achieve their desires for space largely by the creation of boundaries – sometimes they were able to achieve this, sometimes not. At times space was experienced as constraining and the women looked to escape the home and the chores, thus rewriting the traditional public/private divide. Through their domestic practices it was possible to see a clear demarcation of adult and child space, and through their spatial practices the women displayed their taste.

In Chapter 6 I considered how the women's everyday life was constituted through time, considering the different temporalities represented in their visual and interview accounts, including meanings of time that were present in the everyday lives of the women – the immediate, the present, past and future – the different cycles and rhythms of time. As with the previous chapter, maintenance of the home was important, here in the creation of routine, especially with regard to cleaning. Connecting with others and relationships was an important theme in this chapter, as the women talked about their own childhoods and mothers, as well as managing their own time through calendars to coordinate with others, and managing children's behaviour. Yet at the same time the women created boundaries, controlling time through calendars, and by creating 'me time'.

Food, the subject of chapter 7, was central to the women's accounts of mothering. Women were concerned with performing good mothering in their food practices, and in demonstrating that to me. Food was used for connecting with other family members and sustaining family relationships, part of the women's practices in creating family. Whilst maintaining relationships through food within the family, the women were differentiating themselves from others, through their judgements and expressions of taste in their eating practices, which also showed how food was related to identity. Emotions were dominant in this chapter as the women

expressed their anxieties over feeding their children. Children were set apart from adults, not only by their food in this chapter, but also through various material items which contributed to the aesthetics of childhood.

From these data within these four chapters that were based on the women's talk and their photographs, it was possible to detect some common themes. Exploring these themes, a notion of maternal practices and maternal feelings began to emerge, which together, produce a particular way of considering maternal identities. In the following section I consider these two themes separately: maternal practices and maternal feelings, before arguing for their integration as a consideration of maternal identity.

Maternal practices

Throughout the data, cross-cutting themes about maternal practices have emerged, expressed in different ways. One cluster of themes centres around the practices carried out by the women in the home, for the purpose of the maintenance of the home, and of the family. Another group of themes consists of the activities of the women in the creation and maintenance of boundaries, a reworking of the traditional public/private dichotomy; and connecting with others.

Maintenance of home and family

Many of the mothering activities described in my data were centred around the home. This is perhaps not unexpected given that the women in my study were largely home based. My data shows that for this group of women, mothering work not only concerns childrearing, but involves the maintenance and care of the home. The practices carried out by the women to maintain the home –tidying, decorating, and housework, are the application of care through mothering practices, and this extends beyond the boundaries of the home, keeping children safe and loved at school through clean clothes and lunchboxes. Such home making activities can be

understood in Young's (2006) terms as meaning-making – endowing things with living meaning, and so through cleaning and dusting, preserving the meaningful identity of the family. These activities represent the caring work of the maintenance of family. However, the creation and maintenance of home often resulted in a difficult accommodation between the mother's desires for a family home, and for her own self, a sense of self that goes beyond the family in time and space. This was often played out in the women seeking 'me time' and 'me space' through various activities and objects; and by sometimes dissociating with the housewife role.

The extent to which women's activities centred around creating and maintaining the home, the tidying and controlling of mess, showed the importance of the aesthetic dimension of mothering. This was revealed as a separation between an aesthetics of childhood, and one of motherhood. The aestheticisation of childhood was particularly evident from the photographs - the bright colours of plastic plates; themed lunchboxes; themed bedrooms; and the presence of large, colourful plastic toys, amongst more tasteful, adult surroundings.

The aestheticisation of everyday life is associated with the practice of consumption. This include the branding of childhood, and how, for example, a room like Tamsin's son's, overloads the senses, with its bright, almost fluorescent colours. The mothers were aestheticising childhood through their activities, by this I mean that they were making childhood special and important, identified by Miller as the child as object of devotion (1998). This meant that they used items of consumption such as colourful plastic plates on which to place their children's food, and they arranged it in a particular way that was supposed to be appealing to children. This engagement in aesthetic practices also included decorating their own rooms, and those of their children. It is also apparent from my data that there are different aesthetics of childhood – for example the photographs of the two boys' bedrooms reveal two

different versions of childhood, and boyhood, drawing on different notions of cultural capital. Bourdieu's work alerts us to the ways in which aesthetic judgments are implicated in practices of creating and reproducing privilege, and the very different ideals of the perfect boy's bedroom captured in my data suggest the significance of social class within the operation of a maternal aesthetic in everyday mothering practices. Whilst at times it is possible to detect some elitism in writings about mass consumption, aesthetically, there is no difference between Tamsin's son's room and a middle class dining room, for example. They both have their own style, into which every item contributes, and fits.

These two distinct aesthetics, that of motherhood, and of childhood, meant that the women engaged in boundary-making to distinguish their objects from their children's objects. This practice may intensify when a woman becomes a mother, in order to protect some time and space to herself, to maintain a separate female identity to that of mother.

Boundaries, and public and private

Reading between the chapters I found that the creation of personal space emerged repeatedly in the women's representations of their maternal practices. I have made sense of this by drawing on Boulton (1983), who asserted that child care had no boundaries in time and space. She found that in order to deal with the overwhelming and exhausting nature of looking after children, many of the women she interviewed created space for themselves in time, or a physical space. This meant that in my study, in their practices of maintaining the home, and in their aesthetic practices, the women were also engaging in boundary making, between the home and wider world, as well as making space for themselves.

The drawing and redrawing of boundaries related to definitions of what was private, and what was public, another theme to emerge from my data. This theme has been

explored in public performances of those mothering activities that are normally private. Carrying out her baby's bedtime routine as a public performance, Simic (2009) aimed to de-authorise a private/public binary, contrasting the messiness of mothering labour with the reflexivity of the public performance, which can be better controlled. This too was something I explored in my installation of motherhood, the recreation of the private space of motherhood, experienced in a public space, in the presence of others. In my research, carrying out observations I came across boundaries with relation to where I was allowed to go in the house, and which activities I was permitted to observe. In fact, it was not possible to observe the normal boundaries of public and private when I entered the women's homes to carry out my observations, which could provide an additional explanation as to why that method was unsuccessful. Such public and private boundaries are constantly being tested in maternal practices, for example in the conduct of friendships. As mothers, women make various decisions, such as how close they allow friendships to become, and what they show of themselves and their homes. Thus, as I was trying to gain access to their homes and private lives, my research methods were echoing the maternal practices I sought to capture.

Focusing on women's everyday activities, I was focusing on the private, on activities that took place in the home. Compared to other cultures, it is considered that 'westernised' women often mother in isolation (Raphael-Leff, 2009). In my research I was describing mothers who in their accounts were anxious and isolated. Motherhood for them was not a site of solidarity, despite them living close to their extended families. This meant that often, for them going out, either in public, or in the garden, felt like escaping the maternal role and its responsibilities. This then, redefines the traditional public/private dichotomy, reformulating it as escape/home-making.

The issue of boundaries also emerged in data analysis – when looking for emergent themes, it seemed that everything was intertwined, and it was hard to make a clear distinction between one category and another. Various data, such as laundry activities, could have belonged in various chapters. However, these repetitions became useful in establishing relationships between categories; and these categories merged to become the core of my emerging theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Relationships and connecting

Almost at the opposite end of the spectrum of boundary making, some of the practices carried out by the women in my study involved connecting with others, and maintaining relationships. Thus the women's practices had a role in transcending boundaries as well as making them. The women connected with, and cared for other family members with food and objects such as toys – choosing them with care, and tidying them away. Relationships and connecting with others was also a choice in where they lived, as many lived close to their own families. Sometimes their own mothers helped to care for their grandchildren, and also the mothers themselves. These activities sustained their idea of family, which was very real for them.

Much has been written recently about the idea of 'doing' family (Morgan 1996), that by carrying out activities, individuals create family. Rather than family links being weakened, as proposed by the individualisation thesis, it is considered that families play a fundamental part in relations between individuals, and that although there are diverse patterns of family life, people still define their lives as part of and feel committed to families (Silva and Smart, 1999). Family relations, like other social relations, are established through routine practices and shared experiences. These relations are sustained through the invisible daily work of mothers and fathers, such preparing breakfast and helping with homework (DeVault, 2000). Family ties

are produced and reaffirmed by constant maintenance work related to feelings for others. Bourdieu (1996) lists the activities that make up this symbolic work, which he calls exchanges of daily existence:

"exchange of gifts, service, assistance, visits, attention, kindnesses – and the extra-ordinary and solemn exchanges of family occasions, often sanctioned and memorialised by photographs consecrating the integration of the assembled family" (p 22).

My data reveals how ideals of family are implicated in food practices; how laundry practices can be understood as being about the maintenance of family; and the work involved in creating 'family time' – time together as a family.

The maintenance work of relationships, and connecting with others, is important in identity formation. In chapter 2 I considered how we understood our identity in relation to others. Bruner (1990), for example, talked of a distributed self, that people around us become complicit in our narratives, and the self becomes enmeshed in a net of others. This concept of embeddedness has also been used by Smart (2007), to talk about relationships with others, meaning that individual lives are embedded in a web of relationships including people who have gone before. This was true for the women in my study, who also talked about past relationships, including with people who had died. Smart argues that because of these relationships, that identity is partly constituted through embeddedness, the individual deciding 'who I am like', or 'who I am not like'. This was true for some of the mothers I interviewed, who talked about not doing things like their own mothers had done, that they differentiated their practices from them.

The women in my study formed part of a local culture of mothering, a location of which I was also part. Writing about localised cultures of mothering, Dyck (2006) found that day to day interactions between women in a common space allowed for the negotiation of understandings about mothering practices, allowing for the local

construction and contesting of routine practices of mothering. Thus motherhood becomes a collection of collective negotiated meanings (even if experienced in isolation), reworking the views of the experts on what a good mother is. This meant that in my research, some of the practices of the women concerned finding like-minded mothers – women who had the same values as them; and distancing themselves from others.

Although the women engaged in practices that connected family members, and which were important in creating family, the women differentiated themselves and their families, from other mothers, and other families through boundary-making practices that were related to social class and taste.

Social class and difference

Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital provides nuance to structural understandings of class, and includes the ideas of class practices, including food tastes, clothing, body dispositions, housing styles and forms of social choice in everyday life. I have shown how the women in my study were enacting different forms of cultural capital in their parenting practices. I did not intend my research to be about class – I was interested in individual meanings and emerging themes, rather than considering individuals as representations of a social category. However, presenting my data to others revealed the extent to which social class, and notions of cultural and economic capital were an issue in my data – not only in the data I was analysing, but also in my responses to their talk in the interview (either spoken or unspoken) and in my recruitment of women like me, at toddler groups.

Various writers have considered that being a mother involves the production of class and cultural capital (Byrne 2006; Clarke, 2004; Reay, 2000; Armstrong 2006); and Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) demonstrated how mothers' childrearing practices were differentiated by class, producing different classed understandings

about work, gender and access to resources. The activities involved in being mothers and bringing up children can be understood as performative of race, class and gender, and much of the work of mothering involves negotiating, repeating and reciting gendered, classed and raced norms (Byrne, 2006). Class based differences are not simple structural divisions but instead depend on more nuanced social identities, an identity that is based on a local gender culture (Duncan, 2005). In her research, Byrne found that it was the subtle distinctions between different kinds of middle class that most exercised the middle-class women she interviewed, and minor activities had enormous importance. She likened this to a quest to meet like-minded mothers. This was related to the desires of the women in her sample for their children to grow in certain ways, with certain values, abilities and attitudes.

In my research, the theme of social class was acted out and reproduced in the mothers' practices and in the material culture of their home. For example, distancing herself from the values of other people that she came into contact with through her children's activities, was a strong feature in Judith's talk about her mothering practices. It was also implicit in the accounts of some of the women about their food preferences, and where they had chosen to live.

Not only were differences between women revealed through class and taste, but through their domestic practices, practices which normally remain in the sphere of the private, in the home. The women's photographs reveal similar activities, but carried out in different ways, producing a unique version for each mother. They had chosen to carry out their activities according to their moral preferences, in a way they consider is best for the family, for them, and for their child. However, at the same time, these women were expressing the same hopes and desires for their children, and through their activities, were all performing 'good mothering'. This dimension of connectedness and differentiation is expressed by Dorothy Smith (1987) who considered that what separates also connects, for example if

individuals are separated by class or gender this superstructure also connects them. Whilst they were isolated from each other, in their homes, their actions, such as laundry actions, were not collective, yet viewed together, as I have shown the photographs together, their actions are collective, as all the mothers were dealing with the same things.

In this section I have shown that the women's everyday practices consisted of a seamless movement from the maintaining of home and family through largely aesthetic practices, which in turn created boundaries, and meant a redrawing of public and private. This public and private was partially defined through difference and social class, yet at the same time there was a pull towards connecting, and maintaining relationships. It was a constant fluid movement, a pulling back and an opening out to others. I now move on to discuss the women's feelings associated with these practices, my second category of themes to emerge from my data.

Maternal feelings

In the previous section I explored some of the underlying effects and objectives of the maternal practices that characterised my data. In this section I explore the emotional meanings that women associated with their practices. Reading across my data chapters I discovered that often the same themes emerged in how the women talked about their everyday activities of motherhood, and these comprised: emotions; pleasure, the imaginary and desires; and memories, change and continuity. Considered together, these themes are intimate and collectively construct a particular version of conceiving maternal identity.

Emotions

Talking about their everyday lives, the women often invoked emotions such as anxiety, fear, anger and frustration, and emotions were sometimes present in the research encounter. Parenting brings out people's deepest anxieties, hopes, and

fears (Karpf, 2006), and there were many times when the women expressed anxiety over their maternal practices. This was most evident when the women talked about food, and feeding their children. The prevalence of the topic of food in women's talk not only indicated their anxiety about this topic, but it also meant that it was used by the women to express their more general anxieties about being a mother.

Some of the interviews were characterised by emotions, where the women would talk at length about a particular topic. Some used the interview to release emotions, or re-experience emotions, rehearsing arguments. Sometimes emotions were present as an undercurrent, even if the women themselves did not explicitly talk about their feelings. My own emotions were present in my research encounters – mothering was an emotional issue for me. During my fieldwork, my own mother died unexpectedly, and in my sample what seemed to be a surprising number of the women's mothers had died too, or they were estranged from their own mothers.

In chapter 2 I discussed recent moves in sociology to consider the emotional and relational dimensions that are meaningful in everyday life, with regard to relationships and families (Smart, 2007). In my data, I found that emotions were invested in the idea of family, and the idea of the right place to bring up a family. Places where parenting took place were also sources of anxiety, as women expressed fears that their children might be in danger. Some of the women had created oases of calm in their homes, as a refuge from the emotions of bringing up children, keeping them an adult space.

Imagining, pleasures and desires

Pleasure is an emotion which warranted further discussion, and which I have linked to the associated feeling of desire, and women's imaginings. It was an unexpected

theme to emerge from my data, somehow I had not considered that women would find joy in their mothering activities. The women described how they took pleasure in baking cakes, in the taste of food; and how they anticipated the delight of their children in the purchase of a toy, for example. Some of them also described how they took pleasure in the mundane, rather than simply in special moments. The idea of imagination also came to the fore in my methodology – for example, using auto/biography, putting myself in the women's shoes, but also in the presentation of the data, as including the women's photographs in the data helps the reader to imagine the mothers' lives.

Carol Smart (2007) conceives of the imaginary as the ways in which relationships exist in one's imagination, not merely limited to individual or personal experience but also connecting with the social and cultural level. In popular culture, specific ideals of families or assumptions about family life are reproduced, and she suggests that the families that we see in popular culture, are the families we live by. They inhabit our imaginations, and

"constantly impinge upon our actual routine practices" (p 51).

It is these "families we live by" that helped to fuel the desires of some of the women in my study, in their desire for an aesthetically pleasing home, for example. The women sometimes talked about their desires, or sometimes they were expressed through their photographs, such as a longing for a clean, tidy and beautiful house; or maybe not wanting their children to grow up. There was also desire for having time and space to oneself, and wishing that they did not have to hide their belongings away from their children.

My earlier discussion of the negative emotions related by the women, together with their accounts of pleasure in their lives, reveals another dimension to the everyday experience of motherhood. Often, activities would be associated with contradictory emotions. For example, whilst feeding the family was a source of anxiety and guilt,

it was also a source of pleasure in baking cakes. This suggests that being a mother involves extreme emotions, it is not something that is associated with indifference, rather, it incites passion.

Memories, change and continuity

Memories were a constant theme in the mothers' narratives, as they talked about certain objects; food; where they lived; and their own childhoods. The women talked about the people they were, with an awareness that they had changed, and they recreated stories about how they mothered in the past. They also related their current experiences to their own childhoods. This relates to the idea of narrative identity, that the self is narrated, and that we use past experience to make sense of identity. A family is a memory group and Smart (2007) suggests that families occupy a special place in the laying down of strong memories. Families provide the context in which we learn what to remember and what to forget, and it provides shared memories. Smart suggests that there are particular moments when we are likely to remember our childhoods and family history, for example when an adult becomes a parent, and it is interesting that two women, Donna and Angela, who discussed their childhoods, relating it to their own mothering, were sisters.

Most approaches to memory relate personal memory to wider social, cultural and historical processes (Kuhn 1995/2002; Thomson and McLeod, 2009), suggesting that individual, and collective memories are linked. In addition, personal memories are embedded in social contexts, and there are organised cultural practices supplying ways of understanding the world (Miztal, 2003). This means that for the women in my study, their memories have cultural and social similarities. People who belong to a certain generation share certain social memories, and by referring to their childhood, the women were situating themselves in a particular generation. For the women in my study, the role of memories with relation to mothering could be that they provided some comfort, that by telling themselves stories about their

own childhoods, they were reassuring themselves that they were managing as well as their own mothers. Given the inherent instability of living next to the unbounded and open system that is the growing child (Baraitser, 2008) this claiming of continuity makes a great deal of sense.

Memory is also embodied, the body is important as a reservoir of memories and a mechanism of generating them (Misztal, 2003). This means that carrying out the embodied activities of motherhood, the women were engaging with their memories of their own mothering, and of their own mothers, with activities such as hanging out the washing and baking cakes. Thus these domestic practices were also a reaching back to the past – the women were caring for the home and their children in the same way as their own mothers, and past generations.

Williams (1977) considered that in a certain phase of the dominant culture there was a reaching back to past values, because they signified areas of human experience which the dominant culture neglected. In Chapter 7 (Food), I linked certain maternal practices, such as baking with residual values, and I also considered the notion of family time, a place outside of normal, modern time, where the pace is slower, drawing on values of the past. Here the family might be considered as a place of safety, as a defence against widespread uncertainty in the world. The everyday life that is being created by these maternal practices is safe, because they replicate practices that were carried out in the past (or imagined to have been carried out), and the past is always secure and safe, because it has already happened, there are no surprises.

I also found that motherhood was characterised by instability – often conceptualised in terms of stages such as potty training, and sleep problems. Whilst my research involved single interviews, and captured a mother's story about her activities at a particular moment in time, nevertheless, it also allowed for mothers

to talk about the past and the future, situating themselves in the flow of time, and talk of the past and future meant that there was a sense of continuation. The physical home was in constant flux, never fixed, as the children's needs changed. Change was also characterised by the transformation of material culture of motherhood that had taken place since I was a mother of young children.

Having considered in turn each of the maternal feelings that comprise this second category to emerge from my data, I suggest that these themes of emotions; imagining and pleasure; and memories, are intimate themes and through them a particular version of identity can be conceived. I therefore suggest an understanding of identity through emotions, memories, and imaginings and desires – an intimate understanding of identity which can be explored by using the method of auto/biography in conjunction with photo-elicitation.

Before I complete this section, I consider what the identification of two distinct categories, practices and feelings, means for a theory of motherhood. Whilst I have discussed these two themes separately, the differences between the two are not clear-cut, as practices are imbued with feelings, and feelings can be produced by practices, and I argue that the two combined are required in order to understand motherhood. The best way that I can illustrate this is by drawing on my earlier work on representations of motherhood. In chapter 3 I described how I designed an interactive exploration of motherhood. It was designed as a performance, and participants were invited to explore the role of mother, by taking part in repetitive activities typically associated with motherhood. Although the child was missing, the performance evoked feelings of being a mother. The installation explored to what extent performance was constitutive of motherhood, and it suggested that practices are embodied and saturated with feeling. Thus the feelings and practices were not disconnected but were evoked together, and my research is an exploration of the relationship between practices and feelings.

In the next section I return to the sociological tools I introduced in Chapter 2, the theories of identity, and everyday life and consider how they can deepen my understanding of my data.

Using theories of the self and the everyday

In this section I consider the sociological tools I introduced in Chapter two, and which I draw on in to help me interpret my data. These theories broadly fell into two categories - theories of identity, and the everyday. In this section I draw on these theories to argue for a particular version of maternal identity, and a particular version of the everyday, based on the data generated in my research.

Maternal identity and maternal practices

In Chapter 2 I described narrative and discursive approaches to identity, considering that the self is distributed, enmeshed with society, and relationships; produced through discourses and narrative, and is related to memory. This means that maternal identity, or subject positions, is therefore constituted by the activities mothers do – those they choose to do, those they choose not to do, and the meanings they give those activities. Motherhood is therefore a consequence, rather than as a cause of the activities that are carried out, and motherhood is done or accomplished in the course of social interaction.

This suggests that maternal identity is not stable, but evolves, through the activities determined by the needs of the child. This has been found by Baraitser (2006) who suggests that becoming a mother can generate something new for/within the mother's own self; where the ability to attend to another person's needs becomes an expression of (maternal) creative capacity. As children grow and develop, women evolve from one maternal identity to another (Parker, 2009). They move from being a mother who supports a head, to a mother pushing a buggy, to a mother waving a hand, to a mother waiting for a hand to hold.

The predominant subject position enacted by the women in their talk and their practices as shown in their photographs, was that of 'good mother', for example in how they narrated and showed their food practices, the craft and educational activities they carried out with their children. In being 'good mothers', the women sometimes stressed to me how much they loved their children, and emphasised the caring activities that they carried out, and how much time they devoted to them. Through their practices, they were all conforming to a certain kind of mothering – what Hays (1996) calls intensive mothering.

Interviewing the women, I found that their engagement with expert voices was implicit – all were engaging in intensive mothering, and many talked about the importance of healthy eating and carried out the 'five a day' government advice; as well as implicit agreement on how space, and time, should be organised. In addition, they reflected on this advice, as other studies have also found (Gabb, 2008; Sevón, 2007).

Whilst the women all chose to carrying out practices which meant that they felt they were conforming to the dominant normative discourse of a 'good mother', they achieved this in different ways. This meant that there were variations on the subject position of 'good mother'. For example, there were some who prioritised carrying out housework, and stressed the importance of having a clean home. Others, conversely, presented themselves as hating housework, and that instead they preferred to play with their children – another version of a 'good mother'.

Another subject position, which was revealed through activities associated with food, was that of taste, status, discernment and lifestyle. This subject position was another enactment of the 'good mother'. Here, in their talk the women showed me how they performed 'good mothering' by buying organic, tasty food; going out to restaurants; and not giving their children junk food. They used their talk about food

to express their identities. Sometimes, to do this, they defined themselves in opposition to others. This was also true for the objects that they and their children consumed, especially toys, for example some women talked about their dislike of large plastic toys, dissociating themselves from the plastic toys that were given to their children by others.

Whilst some mothers considered that a good mother was organised, and planned ahead; there were other mothers who presented themselves to me as spontaneous, and who liked to escape the house and their chores. This was associated with the idea of mother as playful, someone who took pleasure in their activities; or who lived through joy of their own children, imagining their pleasures. Some mothers presented themselves to me as good mothers through adversity, how their lives were difficult in bringing up two or more children, and yet how they had managed, largely on their own, or as single mothers. Those women, too, who had been estranged from their own mothers, could be said to producing a survival narrative in their talk.

The photographs that the mothers took were a presentation of the self, and represented the ideal self. Thus there were quite a few photographs which represented healthy eating; and mess was confined to "acceptable mess" – there were no photographs of the less palatable household mess, that is more private. However, I sometimes encountered this when I visited their homes, and it was something they talked about, rather than showed through their photographs. Therefore it could be said that compared to photographs, their narratives represented the "messy" self, where they were able to present a more ambivalent account of motherhood (May, 2008). Sometimes they used the interview to present a more ambivalent account of motherhood, using the interview like a cleansing ritual, where they could express their guilt over how they did not manage to

perform good mothering, perhaps because their child would not eat the healthy food they had prepared.

In my research, I was not only considering how the women perceived their identities as mothers, but also how the activities they carried out were expressions of their identities, and how in their talk, and activities, how they enacted different subject positions. This means that motherhood as a social identity is made through those practices I have identified. The women did not merely carry out activities related to food, material culture, space and time, these practices also constituted their daily experiences, and their experience of being a mother, and these topics forged a complex maternal identity. However, as I have identified through their differing practices, it shows that motherhood as a common identity is broken down into a site of division and diversity.

The idea that through their talk, and their activities, women enacted a maternal identity, suggests that understanding identity will be enhanced by considering Judith Butler's theory of performativity (2000). She suggests that the natural-seeming coherence of masculine gender for example, is constructed through the repetition of stylized acts in time, the repetition establishing a "core" gender. Thus, gender can be theorised as performative. This can be extended to motherhood – that by performing activities of mothering, maternal identity is produced afresh, every day, and a woman becomes a mother. However, this appears to contradict the idea of memory and identity, and the idea that an individual's identity is found in the ability to "keep a particular narrative going" (Giddens, 1991, p 54). It is generally considered (eg Misztal, 2003) that memory is an important medium through which identities are constructed, that the past is used to make sense of who we are today.

However, rather than individuals reinventing themselves afresh every day, Butler's notion of performativity broadens out the idea of practices, to consider that practices are an enactment of discourses. This means that performances are not a pre-existing subject acting out scripts or roles, but are the product of various discursive conventions, norms and practices, cited and reiterated across a range of social settings and in a range of interactions. For Butler, there is no subject that precedes these norms, the subject instead appears in and through the performative enactment of them. The fact that each woman in my study produced something similar, every day suggests that that in their mothering practices, the women were enacting existing discourses. They had a mental image of 'mother', and the body was enacting the discourse - and there was a conversation between two, between the practices and the discourses. Discussing gender, Butler writes:

"the addressee never quite inhabits the ideal s/he is compelled to approximate."
(2000, p 110).

This also explains that whilst all the women in my study were performing motherhood, there was nevertheless a disjuncture between the ideals of motherhood, and the fact that mothers considered that they never achieved these ideals. The discourse of good mother suggests that it is important to strive every day to be a good mother, in the interests of the child. Yet within this discourse there is the acknowledgement that no mother will ever achieve it.

Through their practices, the women in my study were "working out" how to do family, and how to be a mother, and as they performed motherhood, they were reflecting on what they are doing. This is mothering as reflexive project, and it helped them to define their own maternal identity. Gabb (2008) found that parents tried to bring mediations of ideal parenthood and/or advice into their family practices. However they did not so much use an idealised version of family, rather understood parenting as a reflexive project. She showed how parents reflected on their responses to produce a socially acceptable reply, revealing that parenting and

family practices are reflective processes. As I asked the women to take photographs of their mothering practices, and then discuss them, I was asking them to reflect on their practices, and it is through reflection that they also negotiated discourses.

My research makes a contribution to current debates concerning the centrality of maternal practices in the formation of maternal identities. However, it moves these debates on by considering that associated with performing these practices, are the accompanying feelings, and which give meaning to them. However, my thesis remains incomplete as I have yet to consider how the everyday life of mothers can be theorised. I now move on to theories of everyday life, and their relevance in the data I have presented.

The everyday

In the second chapter, I raised the issue of the problematic of everyday life, that how it is theorised, researched and represented, has been a concern of many theorists, and there are competing claims as to what everyday life is, how it should be theorised, and represented. In that chapter, I related research on motherhood to theories of the everyday, broadly dividing the theories of the everyday in to two categories, discussing them in relation to bodies of work that have been carried out on motherhood. I also considered how it was possible to research motherhood using the notion of practices, and the usefulness of an ethnographic approach. In this section I assess my data in light of these theories; whether my research has generated theory, one of the goals of ethnographic approach; and what my research can to offer to the theories of the everyday.

Grounded in the data generated by its methods, ethnography aims to generate data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983/2005), rather than test existing theories, although it is acknowledged that existing theories form part of our implicit

knowledge. This suggests that rather than looking at theories of everyday life to interpret my data, I can look to my data for generating theories, which I can then compare to existing theories.

In Chapter 2, considering the everyday, I showed how theories of the everyday fell into two categories. I explored how the everyday had been theorised as a site of resistance - how people resisted the power of the dominant structures of society through their practices. My data suggests that by performing 'good mothering', the women were accepting and enacting dominant structures in society, although they had crafted their own particular versions of what this dominant discourse meant. In the chapter I also showed how the everyday had been theorised as opposing change, that it represented the banal and repetitive dimensions of culture. I have shown in my data how sometimes family, and mothering practices can be associated with the residual elements of culture (Williams, 1977), and thus my data supports the idea of the everyday as something which opposes change, instead consisting of repetitive actions and thoughts. However, in my data I have also explored how women dealt with change in their lives, and so I looked elsewhere for an explanatory theory.

I turned to Felski (1999-2000), who considered that the everyday was a combination of the mundane and special, my data supporting this notion. She considered that the everyday consisted of repetition and

"the essential, taken-for-granted continuum of mundane activities, that frames our forays into more esoteric or exotic worlds... synonymous with the habitual, the ordinary, the mundane" (p 15).

She considered that the everyday was something to be embraced, rather than transcended, and suggested that it made more sense to

"think of the everyday as a way of experiencing the world rather than a circumscribed set of activities within the world" (p 31).

The everyday life I describe is a particular everyday life grounded in the activities carried out by the women in my study – someone who is not a mother, or a mother who works full time, would have a different everyday life. Nevertheless, from my data I contend that the practices carried out by an individual constitute their experience of everyday life, and that the everyday is made up of our everyday thoughts and feelings; as well as relationships. The everyday consists of those activities and thoughts that people do not normally narrate, such as putting washing in the washing machine, or going to the photocopier, and which can be represented by photographs. It is also about the mundane, rather than the spectacular; and it is about the senses, an interaction between practices and feelings. This is a bottom up approach, consistent with ethnography, meaning that I have started with the experience of individuals, and used that experience to theorise. My understanding of the everyday is therefore a concern with micro processes and meanings, focusing on individuals, and their own understandings of the world, whilst acknowledging that individuals are part of wide social and cultural processes and consider them as expressed through their individuality.

As my research explored the everyday and maternal identity, I would like to make some tentative conclusions from my data about bringing together theories of the everyday, and how the individual is theorised. Felski (1999-2000) considers that identity is formed out of a distinctive blend of behavioural and emotional patterns, repeated over time, in other words, that identity and the everyday are linked. The everyday is populated with individuals, and individuals are part of everyday life. In addition, subjects are constituted through the everyday, through the activities they carry out. I consider that by studying the everyday it is possible to explore identity. I would also like to propose a theory of everyday life, that is based on work published by Brett Williams in 1988.

The texture of everyday life, creativity and craft

Williams introduces the idea of dense texture in everyday life, and that people weave a texture through their everyday practices. She describes people with few resources, who deal with the conditions of constraint creatively, such people coping with their material conditions by

“texturing domestic density by weaving through it varied sights, sounds and rhythms” (p 102).

Her idea of texture refers to dense, vivid detailed interwoven narratives, relationships and experiences, visible in the way that people decorate their homes.

I would like to borrow Williams’ idea of dense texture in everyday life. I consider that in the same way, the practices and the feelings of the women in my study that I have described in previous chapters, create a dense texture of maternal everyday life. This texture is particularly evident when I recall the women’s images of washing and laundry, for example on a fire guard next to a TV that is showing a programme.

Within this idea of creating texture, is the idea of popular creativity, and a creativity of practice (Fiske, 1992). This creativity applies to the practices of daily life, in the ways of dwelling, of walking, and of making do. I would like to apply this concept to how the women in my study applied creative thinking in their practices, not only in the decor of their homes, but also being creative in their mothering practices – reflecting on how they thought ‘good mothering’ should be, and finding creative solutions to problems, for example in dealing with a child who was having difficulty in being potty trained.

In my research, the women weaved a texture of everyday life, using their belongings and those of their children; connecting their own lives and the lives of their children and their own mothers in space and time; creating a texture in which close-up, in micro detail can be seen valleys and mountains, which are the slow times and the hurried times. Within this idea of highs and lows, the variance that

produces the texture, is also the idea of regularity, a regularity of a pattern, and also the regularity of days passing.

The weaving of texture also conjures up an image of mother as craftsperson. In my research I have been learning the craft of motherhood, by going into women's homes and seeing what they do, and looking at, and discussing their photographs, comparing their version of motherhood with my own craft of motherhood. Being a crafts person involves learning through hardship, and learning through bodily actions. It involves drudgery, ingenuity and creativity (Kondo, 1990). It seems to me that all of these aspects apply to motherhood, a skill that is learned on the job rather than being formally taught, and in fact the women in my study who had more than one child, who had "learned on the job", displayed more confidence in what they were doing. Often, a craftsperson aims to make beautiful objects, and to have pride in their work. The mothers I interviewed were the experts in bringing up their children whether they knew it or not, and had an implicit, embodied knowledge. Feminists have called on women, to claim their knowledge, Smith (1987) for example arguing for individuals to be experts in their own lives. Like early feminists, one of my research aims was to valorise the mundane everyday activities performed by women. Yet I felt that the women did not particularly value their mothering skills.

In this section I have considered the theories which have helped to interpret my data, and how in turn my data has helped me to shape a theory of the everyday activities of motherhood. I concluded that maternal identity was constituted through an interaction of practices and a negotiation of discourses, and that the everyday could be theorised as the unnarrated practices and mundane practices, as well as thoughts, feelings and relationships. I concluded by arguing for a theory based on the interplay of these factors creating a rich texture of everyday life, in which creativity was practised, to produce a craft of motherhood. In the following section I conclude by outlining my thesis on the everyday practices of mothering.

Conclusion

My thesis contends that motherhood consists of various practices through which women maintain the home and by extension the family. These practices concern connecting with others as well as boundary making within the home, as well as differentiating from others through practices of distinction. Associated with these practices are feelings such as emotions, memories, pleasure, the imaginary and desires. I assert that it is not possible to conceive of a maternal identity without these feelings. I conceive maternal identity as an interaction between maternal practices and dominant discourses on motherhood. I consider that it is possible to explore by studying the everyday, and I would like to propose a version of the everyday that consists of everyday thoughts and feelings, relationships and predominantly mundane activities, those practices of everyday life that are not normally narrated.

In the next and final chapter I move on to discuss my methodology. I consider its rigour and its strengths and weaknesses, before looking ahead to practice implications.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Introduction

In this chapter I reflect on the methods I have used in my research, and assess my study's contribution to the body of academic work on motherhood. I conclude by evaluating the ways in which the research contributes to existing literatures and to practice.

The challenges of exploring motherhood

There are many challenges associated with exploring motherhood. Firstly, it is a topic that has been much researched, that makes it hard for new research to make any claims of originality. In addition, the practices of motherhood I wished to investigate largely took place in the home, away from the public eye. In Chapter 2 I outlined the difficulties associated with researching the everyday, and in Chapter 3 I discussed the difficulties I experienced in establishing my research design – how it faltered when I tried to gain access to women's homes, and how this led me to be creative in coming up with a workable research design. This has meant that the methods I have used have drawn on different theories and processes, although I have retained the original ethnographic spirit with which I set out, such as using photography, and a reflective, auto/biographical approach.

My research has been intimate, using reflexivity and auto/biographical methods – looking into the private lives of mothers, and examining my own, and making use of my own experiences and feelings to interpret my data. In addition, the visual has been a strong element to my research, and throughout my thesis I have drawn attention to the benefits of using photographs in my research. As I pointed out in Chapter 3, these methods I used brought with them various issues of reliability and validity.

The methods I used meant that I discovered that the activities of motherhood around material culture, space, time and food were practices for the purpose of maintaining home and family, and within these practices there were simultaneous processes of boundary making and connecting with others, which meant a reworking of the traditional public/private dichotomy, into home and escape. I revealed that through these practices, drawing on Butler's theory of performativity, the women were enacting existing discourses of 'good mothering'; and that for these practices to have meaning for the women, they were associated with various emotions and memories, which I was able to uncover through the intimate methods of auto/biography and photo-elicitation.

Assessing my research

Using intimate methods, my research has looked inwards, and has focused on the home and domestic practices, rather than on the public, and wider social practices. It has benefitted from making use of different theories and methods, indeed, Gabb (2008) argues that it is important to use lots of different methods when carrying out intimate research, such as research in families. My research shows that my chosen research method of auto/biography, photo-elicitation and interviews, is a good way of researching the everyday, and researching a privatised localised culture such as mothering, and capturing its flavour. This method can be a good way to access different cultures, and to gain an insight into their less public practices, meaning that the combination of combining observations, photographs and interview is a new way of looking.

The intimate methods I used, looking into the private lives of mothers, and examining my own has provided me with a unique insight into the women's everyday lives, and my method of auto/biography and photo-elicitation has enriched my interpretations, that a plain reading of the transcript would not have produced. The methods I have chosen have meant that I have produced a certain

kind of data too – private experiences of motherhood, and the women's feelings about their maternal role. However, this closeness meant that at times I was too close to the data, too. For example, for a long while I resisted discussing class, and it was difficult for me to realise that class was important. This closeness to the data also hindered my writing of my thesis, and formulation of my thesis. I struggled to write in a way that was of sufficient rigour to be acceptable for the academic community, yet was sufficiently descriptive to bring my research participants to life, so that they did not appear flat on the page.

The focus on private practices in my research questions and research methods meant that in my data there are also absences and silences. My recruitment methods, where I tended to recruit women like me, meant that my sample is white and largely from the upper working class. There were some women who declined to take part, saying that they did not want to put their mothering practices under scrutiny. Almack (2008) writes that if people exclude themselves from research projects because they feel they cannot present positive or successful accounts of their family lives, this has implications for the sorts of stories that can be accessed and told. Reasons for not taking part can alert researchers to potential silences. This suggests that the women who took part in my study were those who felt confident in their mothering.

The women were also only presenting a partial story to me. Narrative and discursive approaches suggest that identity is fluid and constructed, and that interview accounts are managed. It is not easy for mothers to admit their incompetence (Sevón, 2007), thus the women were engaging in impression management when they showed me their photographs, and talked about them, largely presenting themselves as 'good mothers'.

I have researched 20 women, and I am the 21st mother in the study. Not only was I exploring motherhood to help me make sense of my own mothering dilemmas, I was using my own experiences, auto/biographically, in carrying out the interviews and interpreting the data. My own issues about mothering will have guided me to select certain themes and certain fragments of data, and led me to read certain literatures. My issues about being a mother were very similar to the women I interviewed. For example, experiencing tension between wanting to have a fulfilling and enriching life, needing time to myself, and also wanting to be a good mother, which for me means always being there for my children. I also found that I constantly monitored my own mothering, providing a commentary on what I am doing, evaluating – and within that, noticing what other mothers do – being reflexive. This suggests a certain insecurity that women feel about mothering, which has implications for whether they would have agreed to take part or not in the study, and whether they felt able to express their insecurities in the interview. Whilst my methods allowed for an intimate exploration of motherhood, putting my own mothering under scrutiny using auto/biographical methods was not always easy, and whilst I put myself under the microscope like my participants, unlike them I have been unable to hide behind anonymity.

Using the visual medium of photography has been very important in my research, and in writing my thesis in helping me to elucidate, and show private practices. Not only did it help me to engage with women, when I showed them my photographs, at toddler groups; but they allowed for a certain kind of talk in the interviews, and allowed for the possibility of the unspoken, to be shown. The images helped me to interpret my data, as they were something I could look at, and reflect upon, after the interviews and provided further evidence to supplement my interview data, and my fieldnotes. They helped me to generate categories, and to make connections between parts of my data, for example making connections between the colourful plates of food, and the children's bedrooms. In their narratives, there was glossing

over of certain mundane activities, yet later, I could not ignore photographs of these activities, even if they were not discussed much.

Presenting these images as part of my data has been crucial. Writing my thesis, I wished to evoke the mothers' daily lives, and the photographs help the reader to imagine. The photographs have helped to convey the sense of the everyday, enabling the viewer to see the repetition of ordinary things, and helping to convey the mundanity of the women's lives. The photographs show scenes that are mundane and very recognisable, different to idealised images in the media.

Considered as a whole, the photographs are a documentation of contemporary mothering culture, and part of a general nationwide culture. They are also documentation of a particular version of mothering and childhood, and children of a particular age.

I have discussed the idea that the everyday is hard to represent, and I argue that presenting images in a written text can be an additional way of representing the everyday. I consider that images provide data that words cannot represent (Halford and Knowles; 2005, Pink, 2001), and I have experimented with various ways of presenting images and text. My multimedia presentation was a purely sensual presentation that had no explanation at all. I wished to retain this element in my written thesis, I felt that the images were too important to leave out. I contend that by presenting text and images together, this provides a stronger and richer account of my research.

Concluding comments: contribution of my research and a look to the future

I began my research wanting to find out the secrets to being a good mother, believing that my own mothering of my sons was not good enough. My doctoral journey using intimate methods to uncover these secrets has revealed the mothering practices of a particular group of women in the UK, and their feelings

about their activities. Through my research, I have revealed the activities carried out every day by women as mothers, such as providing food, dealing with the objects of childhood, and how they feel about, and deal with space and time – the interaction of the mothers' activities with space and time. These four areas were the most important to emerge from the photographs and talk of the women I interviewed. My research methods, upon which I have reflected in this chapter, have meant that not only could I focus on the women's everyday practices, but that I could also focus on the meanings they gave to these practices.

Emerging from my research has been a new way of looking, a way of looking at privatised practices and practices of the everyday. It is a method that has taken an ethnographic approach, combining data from fieldnotes, participant-generated photographs and accompanying talk, with a reflexive and auto/biographical stance. With this research I hope that I can contribute to the debates about representing the everyday, and offer a suggestion in producing this new way of looking at the everyday.

This thesis makes a contribution to the body of academic work on motherhood. My research is grounded in the feminist tradition of documenting and valorising women's lives, which was begun by Oakley in the 1970s. It also builds on more recent research carried out in the domestic setting. My research contributes to existing literature on family practices and on mothering, in particular in considering maternal practices as part of a localised culture of mothering. By looking at the individual, and individual meanings, I have been able to uncover subtle variations within maternal practices, and how 'good' mothering is enacted. The sample I drew on to explore my research questions enabled me to look at the practices of motherhood, and the associated feelings, in great depth. The largely homogeneous sample with regard to social categories such as race and class, as well as geographical position, meant that I was able to uncover subtle variations in their

maternal practices, and to formulate a theory of differentiation within the larger, dominant discourse of 'good mothering'.

Initially inspired by my desire to understand how mothers negotiated expert discourses, my research revealed that women responded differently to discourses. My research revealed that women performed motherhood differently depending on their resources, and personal preferences, and this conflicts with the 'one size fits all' approach to advice in official parenting texts.

My research not only contributes to academic understandings of motherhood, but also enhances understandings of the everyday, and how it can be researched. My research shows that intimate research into mothering and other private practices can take place through using auto/biography and photo-elicitation, without necessarily having to carry out observational work. My work also makes some contribution to the shifting of boundaries in how work is presented to an academic audience – through the visual, and through performance art. My research has also evaluated various theories of the everyday, using the data on everyday practices generated by ethnographic methods. This means that my thesis also adds to the debates about what constitutes the everyday.

Throughout my thesis I have shown how my research engaged with intimacy, through its intimate research practices and its findings about the more private parts of motherhood – their lives in domestic space, and their feelings associated with being a mother. My thesis, which brings together practices and feelings, leads to a more sensual understanding of motherhood than has previously been articulated. This understanding of motherhood is symbolised by my performance, which aimed to convey a sensory experience of motherhood.

Based on an understanding of what women do as mothers, this sensual understanding of motherhood contrasts with ideologically shaped ideas of motherhood, and takes a step back from the judgemental ideas of 'good mothering'. The motherhood I describe, based on sensual practices and feelings, is a view of motherhood that is largely absent in official childcare literature.

This focus on sensual practices and feelings suggests a distinct way of understanding identity, and one which has implications for public health policies; and my thesis asks how does thinking about mothering in terms of practices influence how mothers can be supported by health care professionals. I am unable to answer this question from my research findings, but consider that my research can be the starting point for a reformulation of how motherhood is conceptualised in practice settings, and in childcare literature.

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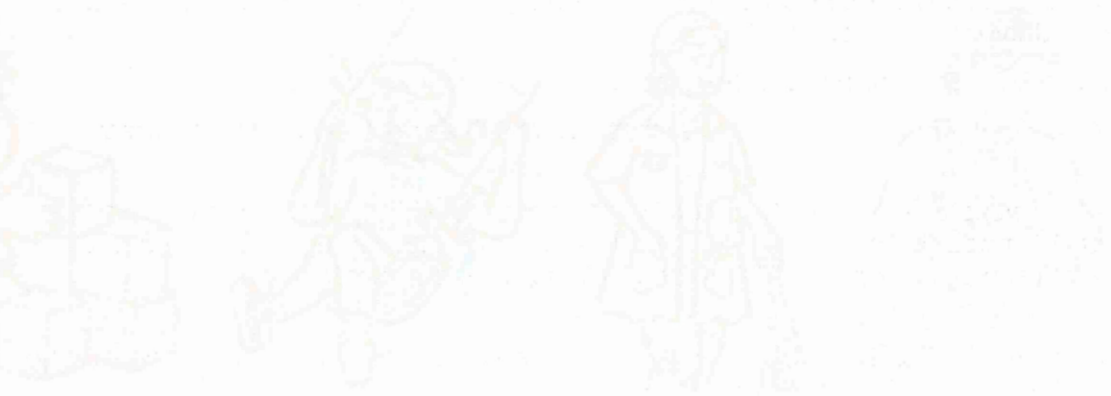
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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Schedule



Appendix B: Interview Schedule



Appendix C: Interview Schedule

Appendix D: Interview Schedule

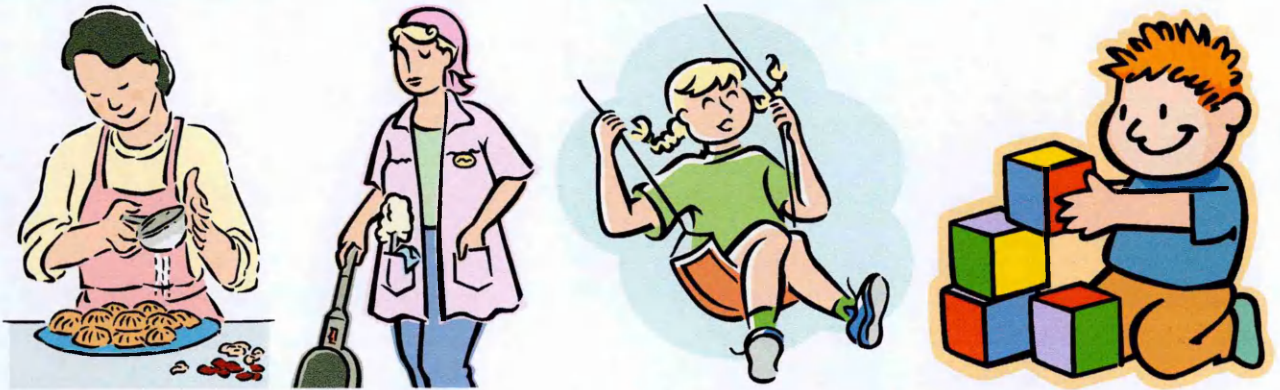
Appendix E: Interview Schedule

Appendix F: Interview Schedule

Appendix G: Interview Schedule

Picturing motherhood

What activities do you do as a mother?



How do you see yourself as a mother?



- Would you like an opportunity to discuss this, and take part in research?
- Would you like a permanent record of a week in your life as a mother, in photos?

If so, find out more by turning over this page!



Picturing motherhood – Information leaflet

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. If after you have read this leaflet you would like to take part, please contact me, Jo Sanderson-Mann (contact details at end of this leaflet).

What is the purpose of the study?

My research aims to discover the day-to-day activities involved in being a mother, as previous research has tended to ignore mothers' everyday lives. I am interested in how this relates to mothers' perception of their identity, in choosing the activities they carry out. I am also interested in the influences on mothers' activity choices, such as family, friends or childcare experts.

Why have I been asked to take part?

I have asked you because I wish to research a few mothers, and would like these mothers to reflect some of the different experiences people have and the different backgrounds they come from. I have asked you because I am mainly interested in mothers of children under school age.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You will be given a copy of the consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If you decide to withdraw, you will have the right to have all or part of your data destroyed.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part, I will ask you to take photos of things or events that best represent you as a mother, and the things you do as a mother, using a digital camera, over one week. From these, I would like you to select 12 images that I can use in my research. I will print copies of them, and arrange a time and quiet place convenient to both of us, to interview you about the photos, and about the things you do as a mother. The interview would last between 1 and 1 ½ hours, and would be recorded on a tape recorder, and typed up afterwards. I would give you prints of the photos that we discuss.

Guidelines for taking photos

The activities that mothers carry out show the values that they have about mothering - things they want to do and things they feel they ought to do. I am interested in how you see yourself as a mother, thus I would like you to take photos of things or events that represent you as a mother, and the things you do as a mother. How would you show your life as a mother to someone who doesn't know you, so that they get an idea of your life as a mother, what it is like being you, the reality of your life? I am not looking for typical "family" photos, eg of celebrations, or portraits.

You could take photos of:

- The activities which you think are important to do as a mother;
- The activities you most enjoy;
- The activities you feel you OUGHT to do, but don't really want to;
- The activities you do, that other mothers don't;
- The things you do for yourself.
- Something that has influenced how you mother, eg a book, or a person.

It may be that some of your photos will have your people in them. If you agree to take part, we will discuss how to take photos where it is not possible to identify them from the photos.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

I do not anticipate disadvantages or risks in taking part in this study. You will decide which photos can be used in this study, and what we will talk about is unlikely to be different to everyday conversations. However, if you wish to talk to a healthcare professional because of what we discuss, I can arrange for you to see your health visitor or GP, or other sources of confidential advice.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You will be given a copy of some of the photos that you take. Some people enjoy having the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their life with another person. By participating, you will also be helping to increase knowledge about how the everyday activities of mothers, and how this relates to mothers' identity.

What if something goes wrong?

I believe that this study is safe and do not expect you to suffer any harm or injury because of your participation in it. However, if you wish to complain, or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study the normal Open University complaints procedure is open to you. This information is available through me, or my supervisors: Professor Rachel Thomson telephone 01908 654246, email r.thomson@open.ac.uk or Dr Mary Jane Kehily, telephone 01908 659260, email m.j.kehily@open.ac.uk.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

What is said in the interview will be kept confidential, and I will respect your rights in what I write about you. Names and other details which could lead to you being identified will be changed, so that you cannot be recognised. I will share my writing and anonymised photos with my supervisors. Study data will be held in a lockable filing cabinet at the Open University for the duration of my research.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

A thesis will be written from the results of the study. If you want to receive a summary of this report, please let me know. I may also publish my research in an academic journal. I will ensure that individuals cannot be recognised in any reports or publications. I will not use real names and I will change information that might identify people to others who know them. I may also use some of your photos, but I will gain your agreement for each photo.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This study is being sponsored by the Open University, Faculty of Health and Social Care, and is being carried out as part of a educational qualification – a PhD. The study has been reviewed by the Open University Human Participants Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for further information

If you require further information, please contact me, Mrs Jo Sanderson-Mann on 01332 870192, mobile 07800 633216, email: j.sanderson-mann@open.ac.uk

Topic guide

1. Demographic details eg age, current/past job, job of husband, whether married, what age did you leave education?
2. Is it OK if I take your photo at the end?
3. How did it feel taking the photos?

What do you enjoy?

What do you do that you don't enjoy?

What do you not do?

What do you do because you think you ought to?

Do you feel influenced in choosing activities, and by who

Are you aware of differences between you and other mothers?

Are these activities part of you, or apart from you?

Describe yourself as a mother, how do you see yourself as a mother

4. Talk me through this photo. eg if it is of washing, do you do this every day, do you do it at a particular time, in a particular way, eg sort out coloureds? where do you dry it? eg getting similar data as the observation, but via interview instead.
5. Why did you photograph this activity? Is it important to you? How is it important? Is it something you enjoy?, or something you don't enjoy, but feel you have to do anyway? or is it something you feel you ought to do?
6. Do you think you have been influenced in these activities, eg by family, friends, books?
7. Were there any activities that you enjoy, that you couldn't photograph, or that we haven't discussed?
8. Are you aware of differences between you and other mothers, eg activities you do, that others don't, or vice versa?
9. Are these activities you think are important to do as a mother?
10. What do you do for yourself?
11. Do you see these activities as part of your identity, or something different.
12. how do you see yourself as a mother?, how would you describe yourself, eg I am the sort of mother who....., perhaps making you different from other mothers.
13. How do you enjoy/not enjoy your day?
14. Have you got a favourite photo? Why is that your favourite?
15. Is there a photo you don't like? Why
16. Was there a particular story you were trying to tell, a message to get across, in these photos?
17. Sign consent form
18. Can you think of anyone else you know who would like to take part in this study, or do you go to a good toddler group, where it might be a good place to talk to other mothers about my study?



CONSENT FORM

Title of project: Picturing Motherhood

Names of researcher: Jo Sanderson-Mann

Please tick box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 15.03.07 (version 1) for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time ☐
3. I understand that the interview is confidential and that Jo Sanderson-Mann will ensure that I cannot be identified in any subsequent writing. ☐
4. I understand that Jo Sanderson-Mann will gain agreement from me for each photo she wishes to use in her research. ☐
5. I agree to take part in the above study ☐
6. I agree that photos, and anonymised data from my interview, will be securely stored within the Open University for the duration of the project, with access only to those with permission from Jo Sanderson-Mann. ☐
7. I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time by contacting Jo Sanderson-Mann ☐
8. I assign copyright in my contribution to Jo Sanderson-Mann. ☐
9. Subject to the anonymity procedures I give Jo Sanderson-Mann permission to quote any of my words used in my conversations for publications and reports. ☐
10. I give my permission for the information I have given to be used for research purposes only (including research publications and reports), with strict preservation of anonymity ☐

Name of Mother

Date

Signature

Jo Sanderson-Mann

Date

Signature

Thank you for taking part in this study

Each mother will be given a copy of the information sheet and a signed consent form to keep.

Contact for further information or to make a complaint

Mrs Jo Sanderson-Mann on 01332 870192, mobile 07800 633216.

Professor Rachel Thomson telephone 01908 654246, email r.thomson@open.ac.uk

Dr Mary Jane Kehily, telephone 01908 659260, email m.j.kehily@open.ac.uk.

Picturing motherhood – personal details

You

Name	
Address	
Telephone number	
Age	
Current/last paid employment	
Marital status (if applicable)	
Highest educational qualification	

Children

How many children	
Name(s)	
Age (s)	

Partner (if applicable)

Partner’s job	
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Name (anonymised)	Age	current/last paid employment	marital status	highest educational qualification	no. of children	Children's ages	partner's job
Adele	32	Assistant crime analysis	Divorced	BSc	1	22 months	n/a
Angela	40	Nurse	Married	MSc	2	16 months, 5 months	social worker
Anne	38	Nurse	Married	RGN/RSCN	3	2, 4, and 6	manager
Carol	37	Shop assistant	living with partner	O level art	4	17 years, 12 years, 13, 13 months	damp proofers
Chris	35	Biomedical scientist	Married	BA hons	2	3 ½, 1 ½	Network manager
Donna	43	Teaching assistant	Married	High level teaching assistant	2	10 and 14	Engineer
Emma	34	Sales Manager	Married	A levels	2	7 ½ and 3 ½	Manager
Gabby	34	Shop assistant	Married	GCSEs	4	7, 3, 3, 3	fire fighter
Helen	29	Teaching assistant	living with partner	BTEC national diploma in childhood studies, A levels	1	18 months	head teacher
Judith	35	Nurse	Married	MSc	5	6, 3, 19 months, 12 weeks, 12 weeks	Youth worker
Julia	26	Mobile phone operative - mending them	Married	GCSEs	1	2	Order assembler/ ft driver
Kath	33	Continuing care assessment sister	Married	Degree	2	2 ¾ and 4 months	Maintenance joiner/self employed
Kay	27	Cashier	married	GCSE	2	3 ½ 2	self employed courier
Lisa	27	office worker	Married	A levels and national diploma	1	2	Shop manager
Lynn	38	Waitress	married	Diploma in catering and hotel management	1	2	Senior software consultant
Melissa	26	Nursery assistant	Single	NVQ level 3	1	15 months	n/a
Natasha	31	Administrator	living with partner	NVQ level 3	1	11 months	manager of garage
Penny	41	sells candles	Married	RGN/RSCN	2	6 years, 22 months	outsourced manager for IT
Sue	39	clerical job at MOD	Married	O levels	2	7 and 3	gardener/ maintenance man at a school
Tamsin	19	Shop assistant/ waitress	Single	3 GCSEs	1	1	n/a